



Historical Aspects of The First Church in Belfast, Maine

Rev. Dr. Doug Showalter, Minister 1976-1987

A 1978 Research Document Revised and Expanded in 2018

I wish to express my thanks to the current ministers of
The First Church in Belfast,
Rev. Joel Krueger and Rev. Dr. Kate Winters.
I have greatly appreciated their friendship and graciousness.

I wish to dedicate this research document to
Orman and Marion Whitcomb,
now deceased, both of whom loved this church deeply,
and also to all the faithful parishioners of this fine church.

July 27, 2018



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All modern pictures of The First Church in Belfast herein were taken by Douglas Showalter during a visit there in 2013.

See ENDNOTES for all other source references.

The First Church in Belfast Time Line

1770 - First permanent settlement of Belfast, Maine

1773 [Jun 29] - Belfast is incorporated as a town

1792 - Two houses of worship are built on east and west sides of Belfast

1796 [Dec 28-29] - The First Church in Belfast is gathered by 7 men, including Ebenezer Price who is ordained the next day, completing this process

1796-1802 - Rev. Ebenezer Price serves The First Church in Belfast

1797 - Asher Benjamin's book *"The Country Builder's Assistant"* is first published

1805-1813 - Rev. Alfred Johnson serves The First Church in Belfast

1811 [Apr 22] - After Massachusetts law changes, allowing independent religious societies to tax their own members instead of the town taxing them for religious purposes, the First Parish religious society forms to support The First Church in Belfast and has its first meeting

1817 [Winter] - **1818** [Spring] Rev. William Frothingham conducts worship services at The First Church in Belfast

1818 [Feb 2] - The First Parish society votes to build a house of worship for The First Church in Belfast

1818 [Apr 7] - The First Parish society purchases property on which to build their church

1818 [Apr 27 and May 7] - Rev. William Frothingham is called first by First Parish, then by the First Church in Belfast to be their Minister

1818 [Jun 10 or 13] - The raising of the frame of the new church is begun

1818 [Nov 15] - First Parish's new church built for The First Church in Belfast is dedicated

1818 [Dec] - Rev. Frothingham finally accepts the call of First Parish and The First Church in Belfast, but remains in Concord, MA with his ill wife Lois.

1819 [late Apr or early May] - A Paul Revere Bell is hung in the belfry of The First Church in Belfast

1819 [late Apr- early Jun] - Belfast is subject to a small pox outbreak and scare

1819 [May 2] - Rev. Frothingham's wife dies in Concord, Massachusetts and that month he returns to Belfast

~ The Division ~

1819 [Jul 21] - Rev. Frothingham is installed as First Parish's minister, even though The First Church in Belfast members vote not to accept his installation due to concerns about his theology

1819 [Aug 12] - Rev. Frothingham and five other men gather a new church, called the First Parish Church

1820 [Mar 15] - Maine is set apart from Massachusetts to be its own state

1820 [May 20] - The First Church in Belfast members secede from the First Parish religious society and their own religious society is formed and called "The Congregational Society associated with The First Church in Belfast."

1822 - The Conference House is built on Primrose Hill for members of The First Church in Belfast

1825 - First Parish hires a person to take care of their new 1818 First Parish Church and attend its fires, presumably in the church's first stoves

1832 [Feb 14] - A church building on Market St. built for members of The First Church in Belfast is dedicated and it comes to be known as the Orthodox or North Church

1835 [Jul 16] - Belfast's *Republican Journal* reports that an organ created by Mr. Henry Erben of New York has been installed in the Unitarian Church (First Parish Church)

- 1835** - The Town Clock is installed in the belfry of the First Parish Church
- 1837** - First Parish Church begins burning coal shipped from Boston in its two stoves with long funnels and drip pans to catch the creosote
- 1843** - First Parish Church is carpeted for the first time
- 1843** - Behind First Parish Church, Oakes Angier builds a vestry building, though it is moved elsewhere in 1859
- 1848** - The high pulpit of the First Parish Church is replaced by a lower pulpit desk
- 1849** [Aug 3] -- Belfast's *Republican Journal* reports that a Stevens Tracker organ has been purchased and installed in the Unitarian Church (First Parish Church)
- 1856** - The Unitarian Parsonage Proprietary, affiliated with First Parish, builds at 7 Church Street a parsonage for the minister of the First Parish Church
- 1860** - A fence is installed around the First Parish Church
- 1868** - In the First Parish Church, slip pews replace box pews, gas and a furnace are installed, and other improvements are made. Major sanctuary remodeling done for about 2 months beginning in January.
- 1878** - In the First Parish Church, a recess with high clerestory windows is added at the front of the sanctuary; also pillars and a new black walnut pulpit are added to that recess area; pews and benches are taken out of the gallery. Possibly the large cross is added to the front sanctuary wall as early as this.
- 1880** - The Young Ladies' Sewing Society purchases the 7 Church Street parsonage from the Unitarian Parsonage Proprietary and gives it to the First Parish society
- 1881** [Feb 26] -The Maine State Legislature changes the law so women can now be members of religious societies/parishes, in response to the request for the same from men of the First Parish society
- Late 19th century - Early 20th century** - The First Parish Church and the North Church likely make the transition in this period to free pews and individual cups for Holy Communion

~ The Reunification ~

- 1921** [Sep 25] - The First Parish Church and the North Church enter into a federation which creates **The First Church (Federated) in Belfast**, though each church still maintains its own separate legal identity. Regular Sunday services and Sunday School for the two congregations now joined together are from this date held only in the First Parish Church, not in the North Church.
- 1922** [Jan 8] - Rev. William F. Skerrye, a Unitarian, is called to serve the newly formed federated church and to help in the reunification of the two churches divided for about a century.
- 1925** [Aug 24] - The First Parish Church and the North Church are legally incorporated together as one church called **THE FIRST CHURCH IN BELFAST**, thus superseding the previous federation.
- 1926** [About] - The North Church building is sold to the Frank D. Hazeltine American Legion Post #43.
- 1926** - A two story Parish House is built behind The First Church in Belfast and dedicated for its use.
- 1936-1938** - The reunification process is completed through legal proceedings in which all assets held by the two religious societies long affiliated with the First Parish Church and the North Church are transferred to The First Church in Belfast. Those two societies go out of existence, presumably soon after making their transfers.



Historical Aspects of The First Church in Belfast, Maine

Rev. Dr. Doug Showalter, Minister 1976-1987

Compiled 1978 and 2018

It is 1818. Although Belfast's population has nearly doubled in the last decade, the settlement numbers just barely 2,000 people. Its citizens situated on two banks of a beautiful, hill-flanked harbor, the name Belfast is well chosen by its original settlers of Scotch-Irish descent. After being routed from their town by the British in the Revolutionary War and then suffering economic hardships due to the Embargo Act of 1807 and the War of 1812, this sea-going community is struggling in 1818 to lift itself above its humble and primitive beginnings.

The state of religion to this time has been rocky. In the last twenty-five years Congregational houses of worship have been built on both sides of Belfast's bay and two successive ministers were called to serve the Congregational Church and town, but many townspeople eventually grew dissatisfied with both ministers. In the case of the second minister, Rev. Alfred Johnson, who served from 1805 to 1813, there were these problems. In addition to the scarcity of funds in Belfast during his tenure, a number of residents came to oppose his ministry for various reasons. For example, some desired to have a minister of a different denomination and some believed that the only religious leadership of value was leadership which didn't expect to be paid.¹ Consequently, the town fell into arrears in paying Rev. Johnson's salary. However, through a law suit Rev. Johnson eventually recovered a "large judgment" from the town before he resigned in 1813. In the next five years, any religious leadership which Belfast enjoyed came in the form of itinerant preachers and missionaries.²

Below are images of the first two houses of worship built in Belfast.³ They were built in 1792 by vote of the town and erected on either side of the Passagassawakeag River which divides Belfast into west



WEST MEETING-HOUSE. BUILT 1792.



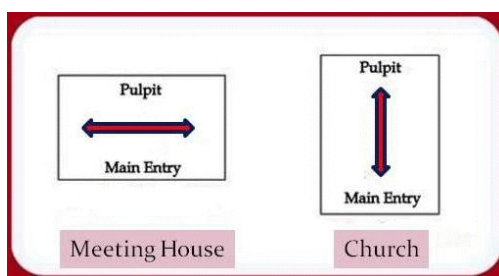
EAST MEETING-HOUSE. BUILT 1792.

and east sections. That town vote stipulated that residents on each side of Belfast pay for the house of worship built on their side.

Early Congregational meetinghouses in New England were either square, like this one in west Belfast, or they were rectangular with the pulpit and entry door on opposite long walls of the rectangle. The image of that west meetinghouse in Belfast shows that it had a pyramidal roof. That is reminiscent of the “four-square style” meetinghouses which were built very early in New England. The only early meetinghouse of that type which still exists today is the Old Ship Church in Hingham, Massachusetts.⁴ It was originally built in 1681.

In the image, the term “meeting-house” is used to describe the 1792 house of worship on the east side of Belfast. However, in technical terms today it appears that building actually was built in the “church style.” The difference is that while meetinghouses have their pulpit and main entry on opposite long walls, church style houses of worship have them on the short walls of the rectangle. Here’s an image which shows those two different styles.

It is said that the very first “church style” house of worship built by Congregationalists in New England was the North Parish Church in Salem, Massachusetts, built in 1772.⁵ Thus, Belfast’s east side house of worship was, apparently, among the earliest church style ones in New England. As New England Congregationalists moved into the 19th century, that church style house of worship became the favored one. And some Congregationalists even went so far as to have their old meetinghouses turned around so a shorter wall faced the street and it was rebuilt in that church style.⁶



Despite previous difficulties, in 1818 there is a new face on religious affairs in town. There is a new enthusiasm and commitment among the people. Many residents have been quite impressed with a young man named Frothingham who is undertaking a stint of teaching at the Academy in town. Trained in Divinity at Harvard, this clergy-pedagogue won people's hearts when he had supplied their pulpit. On April 27, 1818 the First Parish society offers a call to Rev. Frothingham to serve the First Church in Belfast. Then, days later, on May 7, the members of First Church concur in offering their own call to him.⁷ Rev. William Frothingham is asked to be Belfast's third settled Congregational minister. In the months before Frothingham accepts his call, much is happening.

On February 2, 1818, it is voted to build a new house of worship, larger and of a more stately presence than the 1792 houses of worship. The west side of the bay is decided upon as the location for this new building, as that side of Belfast is gradually becoming the more populated side of town.⁸ The South Parish Congregational Church of Augusta, which was built in 1809, is taken as an appropriate model for Belfast’s new Congregational house of worship.⁹ That church in Augusta is exciting, not only because of its large proportions, but also because it was built from one of the

newest church style designs of the time. Asher Benjamin is the name of the new architect whose unusual church design and bell tower will soon become a classic period piece in numerous communities in New England.

However, there is this unfortunate circumstance: the child will long outlive the parent. On July 11, 1864, the Augusta church will be struck by lightning and burn to the ground, leaving in the wake of its debris many moist eyes which will bitterly lament the destruction of that colonial beauty.¹⁰

The early settlers of Scotch-Irish descent in Belfast were Presbyterians. But gradually, as the 18th century approached, many Belfast residents adopted Congregationalism which was then predominant in New England. Both denominations were Calvinistic in theological orientation. The basic difference between them was their respective approaches to church government. Congregationalists believed in the complete autonomy of the local church; Presbyterians did not.

On December 28, 1796, an Ecclesiastical Council of the Congregational order met in Belfast. That Council voted to ordain Rev. Ebenezer Price and to receive six men as members of a new church in town, to be known as The First Church in Belfast. Those six male members then voted to call Ebenezer Price as their new church's pastor. The following day, December 29, Mr. Price was ordained and the gathering of First Church was completed with Rev. Price being one of its seven original members. Rev. Ebenezer Price, was a Congregationalist and graduate of Dartmouth College.¹¹ In traditional Congregational fashion of that time, this church was organized "on the Cambridge platform as to government, and the Westminster Confession as to doctrine."¹²

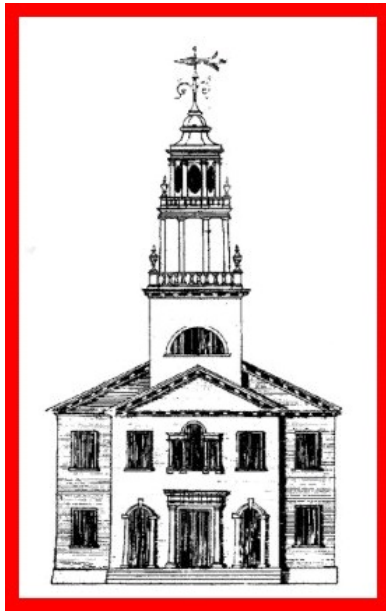
There was a tradition among early Congregationalists which went back to the 1639 gathering of the Church of New-Haven in the New Haven Colony. That tradition was to select seven honorable men from the community who would be the "pillars" of a newly gathered Congregational church. Those seven men would create the new church by solemnly entering in a church Covenant together. Then other individuals, men and women of good character, would be invited to affirm that Covenant, thus becoming members of the new church too. New Haven Colony's Rev. John Davenport related that process for gathering a church to Proverbs 9:1 – "*Wisdom hath builded her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars.*" It seems likely that those who gathered Belfast's First Church in 1796 had that tradition in mind.¹³

With the coming of the 19th century, Belfast began to experience more religious diversity. Congregationalism remained dominant in Belfast, but a Methodist Society was formed in 1809. In 1811, the law changed allowing such religious societies/parishes to be formed more freely and to have "many of the rights, powers, and privileges of corporations."¹⁴ That new law allowed citizens to give financial support to whichever religious society/parish [legally incorporated or not] they were a member of, instead of paying a basic tax to the town to support public worship or public teachers of religion, which had long been the practice.¹⁵ Under that new law, a Baptist society was formed in Belfast in 1811. And Congregationalists in Belfast formed their own society, named First Parish. First Parish's first recorded meeting was held on April 22, 1811 in Belfast's west meetinghouse.¹⁶ Once formed, First Parish became the legal entity responsible for supporting Belfast's Congregational Church, The First Church in Belfast, and its minister.

Thus, it was First Parish, not the town, which voted in 1818 to build a new house of worship for The First Church in Belfast, if First Parish could raise the money for it. Church and state were separated when Maine was set apart from Massachusetts on March 15, 1820 to become its own state. But, such separation had already taken place for religious societies like First Parish, thanks to that law change in 1811.

On April 7, 1818, the First Parish society purchases the property upon which their new church will stand. The property has an unusual history. In 1807, Belfast's tax collector, Abel Baker, turned criminal. He embezzled the funds in his care and then fled town. One Robert Miller was held legally liable for reparations and in time a levy amounting to \$1,763.03 was brought by the courts against Miller's land holdings. Through various political machinations some of Miller's land was made available for purchase by First Parish with certain understood stipulations. One of those stipulations was that First Parish's new church building would appropriate one-fourth part of its galleries for free use by the general townspeople on Sabbath days.¹⁷

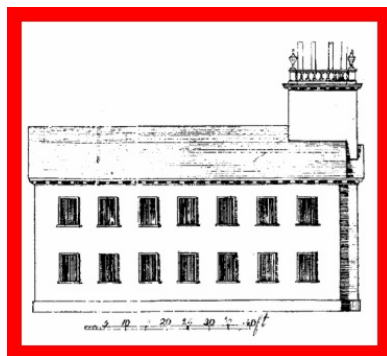
On June 10 or June 13 of 1818, the long awaited day arrives.¹⁸ The erection of the church is begun under the direction of Samuel French.¹⁹ Except for some minor variations, Asher Benjamin's "Design for a Church," found in his 1797 book, *"The Country Builder's Assistant,"* is followed.²⁰



**Asher Benjamin's 1797
Church Design**



**The First Church in Belfast
Belfast, Maine**



Notice how similar the Belfast church is to Asher Benjamin's 1797 design. The basic structure,

including the bell tower and the number and arrangement of windows and doors, is virtually the same.

Though of lesser significance, observable differences in the Belfast church include:

- ~ shutters for windows [though Benjamin's sketch may show closed shutters on the windows]
- ~ the two front side doors match the center front door, instead of being arched as in Benjamin's design
- ~ there are no dentils along the cornices, such as appear in Benjamin's design
- ~ the church has a visible chimney which apparently was installed later, though some Maine Congregational churches in that period began to have stoves: Portland (by 1814), Hallowell (1816), Castine (1817), Augusta (soon after 1818), Wells (1821).²¹ First Church likely had 1 or 2 stoves by 1825 (see p. 18).
- ~ a clock is on the faces of the belfry, which was installed later (see p. 17).

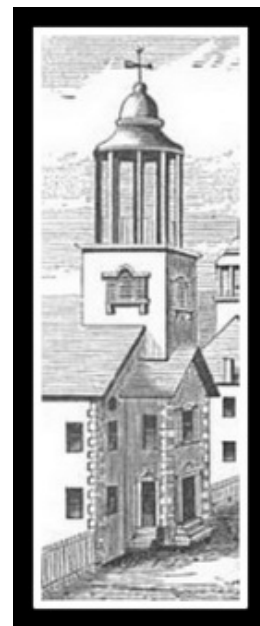


**First Church of Christ
1771 - Farmington, CT**

Early Congregational houses of worship in New England with towers usually had them attached alongside the main frame of their building. For example, see the image to the left of the First Church of Christ in Farmington, CT, which was actually built in a meetinghouse style in 1771. Its tower is completely outside, but attached to, the building's rectangle.²²

Noted architect Charles Bulfinch took the novel step of designing a Pittsfield, MA church with its tower brought partially within its building's rectangle. See the image of that 1793 church on the right.²³

That architectural innovation of Bulfinch was adopted by Asher Benjamin and the Belfast church in 1818 and became very popular among Congregationalists.



**Bulfinch's Church
1793 - Pittsfield, MA**

The hardy men who will handle the stout timbers in the building are drawn from all over the area. Unlike the separated Congregational church [North Church] which was built with all manner of silence, decorum, and dignity years later, this work crew, which is laboring in the days before Temperance, has one or two barrels of "punch" readily at hand to lubricate their spirits.²⁴ Whether it is the "punch," the sea air, or whatever, one commentator brings us the report that the frame of the church building was completed in just two days.²⁵ Raising the frame of a church can be dangerous work, leading at times to injuries and deaths, but this work in Belfast is done well and, apparently, safely.²⁶

The expense of this project is formidable and a matter of great sacrifice for Congregationalists in Belfast. The estimated cost of the church building was \$6,000, which was equivalent to 1/25 of the town's whole evaluation at that time. The money is raised in the customary way of those days. At the minimum rate of \$90, sixty-one of the box pews on the main floor of the church are auctioned off by the First Parish society.²⁷

Typically, such box pew bench seats were on hinges. And because those pews were cramped for standing, those bench seats were raised and hooked out of the way when worshippers stood up to sing and pray during worship. It was the custom to stand during prayer in that period. Then, when the worship service ended, those bench seats would be unhooked and come swinging down, making a great racket all across the church. Someone described that experience this way,

*“And when at last the loud Amen
Fell from aloft, how quickly then
The seats came down with heavy rattle
Like musketry in fiercest battle.”²⁹*

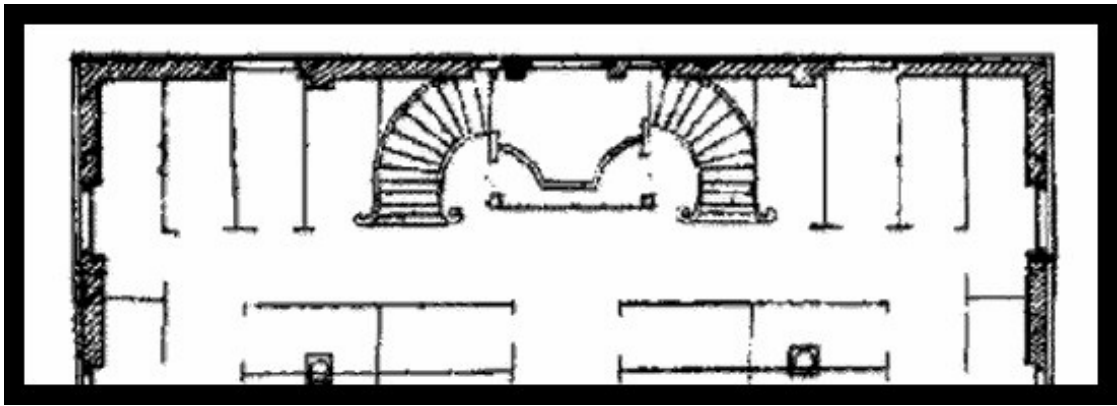
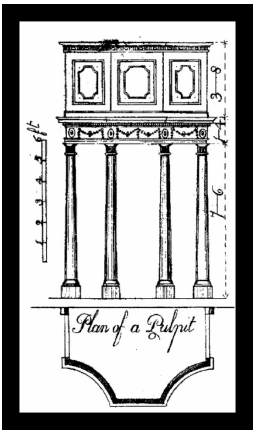
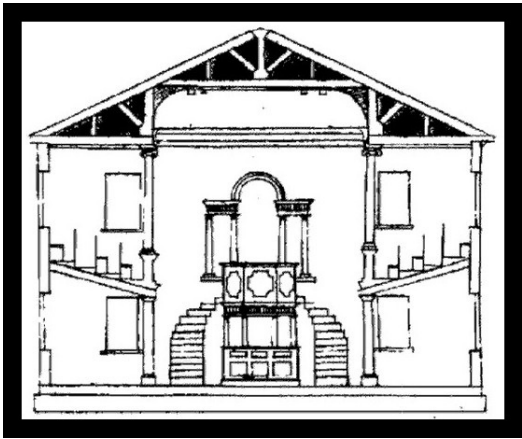
The image below on the left is an example of typical box pews from that period. That image is of the Chestnut Street Meeting House in Millville, Massachusetts which was built in 1769.³⁰ The image on the right is of a door from an original box pew in Belfast’s 1818 church. It was B. Hazeltine’s pew [15] which originally cost \$129. Belfast historian Joseph Williamson indicated that First Church’s original pews were “nearly square, white pews, with green doors fastened on the outside with a large wooden button.”³¹ It’s not clear how to reconcile Williamson’s comment that the pew doors were green with the fact that the sample of one of those pew doors shown below and long on display at the church is white.



Box pews became more common in Congregational houses of worship in the 18th century and they were more commonly sold at auction after 1760.³² Before the use of box pews, worshippers sat on benches and men and women sat on opposite sides of the meetinghouse. In accordance with Reformed Protestant tradition, men were usually seated on the right side and women on the left, as seen from the pulpit.³³ With the use of box pews, males and females in families were eventually allowed to sit together, in what was sometimes referred to as “promiscuous seating.”³⁴ Box pews also helped worshippers keep warmer in unheated houses of worship and gave them some measure of privacy.

This church is Belfast's first grand building. It is dedicated on Nov. 15, 1818,³⁵ even though its wide-boarded exterior still lacks clapboards and paint.³⁶ Before the dedication, the town fathers accommodate it by approving the extension of Church Street in front of the church and as far south as Spring Street. But, access to the church is difficult at first because knolls and tree stumps from the pasture that street is being built on have not yet been cleared away. In seven years, Church Street will be extended to connect with High Street, as it still does today.³⁷

Asher Benjamin’s 1797 design for a pulpit is shown in the three pictures below.³⁸



Asher Benjamin Pulpit Floor Plan

Compare the Asher Benjamin pulpit floor plan design above with the pulpit floor plan below which appears in the pew chart of the 1818 First Church in Belfast. The width of the church in each plan appears to have been 50 feet.³⁹ Notice that Benjamin’s pulpit needs considerably more floor space than First Church’s pulpit because of the winding stairs on both sides of Benjamin’s pulpit. Also, Benjamin’s plan has eight pews across the front of the church, while Belfast is able to fit twelve pews across its front.

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------|---------|----------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| William White. \$161. 60 | William Moody. \$136. 61 | Charles K. Tilden. \$201. 62 | R. Kimball. \$136. 63 | Geo. Watson. \$91. 64 | Minister. 65 | PULPIT. | Let to J. Durham. 66 | S. Upton. \$128. 64 | Jos. Lee. \$136. 63 | T. Cunningham, Jr. \$163. 62 | M. Sleeper. \$140. 61 | William Crosby. \$132. 50 |
| T. Bartlett. \$132. 44 | T. Bartlett. \$132. 44 | John Wilson. \$136. 42 | George Watson. \$135. 41 | Thos. Pickard. \$120. 43 | son, Jr. \$132. 40 | | | | | | | |

First Church in Belfast 1818 Pulpit Floor Plan

Apparently, the Belfast church's pulpit was not closely modeled after Asher Benjamin's 1797 design for a pulpit, though, like Benjamin's, it was built high enough so the preacher in the pulpit could readily see and be seen by the people seated in the galleries. In 1913, Belfast historian Joseph Williamson gave this description of First Church's pulpit:

*"The pulpit, originally level with the galleries, was cut down several times. It was semicircular in shape, with two doors; one opening into the communion closet, and the other into the pulpit, which was reached by a spiral stairway."*⁴⁰

Historian Alice Morse Earle gave a description of a pulpit seemingly similar to First Church's first pulpit when she wrote the following in her 1891 book, *The Sabbath in Puritan New England*:

*"The pulpits were often pretentious, even in the plain and undecorated meeting-houses, and were usually high desks, to which a narrow flight of stairs led. In the churches of the third state of architecture, these stairs were often inclosed in a towering hexagonal mahogany structure, which was ornamented with pillars and panels. Into this the minister walked, closed the door behind him, and invisibly ascended the stairs; while the children counted the seconds from the time he closed the door until his head appeared through the trap-door at the top of the pulpit."*⁴¹

*"The deacons also had charge of the vessels used in the communion service. These vessels were frequently stored, when not in use, under the pulpit in a little closet which opened into 'the Ministers wives pue,' and which was fabled to be at the disposal of the tithingmen and deacons for the darksome incarceration of unruly and Sabbath-breaking boys."*⁴²

Our New England forebears have often been referred to as being "stiff necked." Could it be that their clergy elevated in this manner made them so, at least for those who customarily sat in their church's ground floor pews?

It was typical in Congregational church design of that period to have a large window behind the high pulpit, so the preacher would have good lighting on the pulpit, the Bible open upon it, and the preacher's manuscript, if he used one. Asher Benjamin's 1797 design included a large, three section Palladian window behind its pulpit. However, it is not clear that First Church originally had any window behind its pulpit. Either that or the original window there was replaced with a wall before 1878. In that year it was deemed necessary, because of insufficient light on the pulpit and no window behind it, to have a recess with high clerestory windows built behind First Church's pulpit.⁴³

It was also typical of some Congregational churches in that period to have a large sounding board (canopy) over the pulpit, to help project the minister's voice out over the congregation. Apparently, First Church's pulpit did not have such a sounding board. In 1822, the First Parish society appointed a committee to investigate the cost of such a sounding board, but there is no record that the committee ever made a report on that subject or that a sounding board was added.⁴⁴

As Williamson noted in 1877, at the beginning of Rev. Cazneau Palfrey's ministry at the First Parish Church in 1848 *"the lofty, old-fashioned pulpit gave place to a desk, which continues in use."*⁴⁵

The gallery which extends along three walls of the 1818 church is supported by massive pillars hewn from great timbers.⁴⁶

In late April or early May of 1819 a Paul Revere Bell is hung in the belfry of First Church. It is the first bell in town.⁴⁷

Inscribed on First Church's Revere bell are these words: REVERE & SON BOSTON 1819. Belfast historian Joseph Williamson said that although the Revere bell was not at least twelve hundred pounds, as stipulated in the contract for its purchase, the Parish still voted to accept it.⁴⁸ Years later, Williamson gave a different weight when he quoted a 1911 pamphlet by Arthur H. Nichols which reported that in Revere records the Belfast church bell was number 219, Feb. 17, 1820, and that it weighed 1260 lbs.⁴⁹ Nichols himself described that bell this way:

*"Still in use in perfect condition in First Parish (Unitarian) Church."*⁵⁰



May 20, 1807
Worcester Gazette
Worcester, MA

Revere Bell researchers Edward and Evelyn Stickney reported in 1976 that Belfast's bell is listed in Revere stockbooks and ledgers as being in Belfast in 1820, that it carried the 1819 inscription [mentioned above], that it weighed 1288 lbs., and that it was *"Shipped by Sch. Superb Capt. McFarland for Belfast."*⁵¹

Perhaps that 1820 ledger entry was an after the fact record of that bell's 1819 placement in Belfast? Also, why those differences in the reported weight of First Church's bell? People have stumbled over that weight difference for a long time, but the following seems to be the answer.

It appears that Williamson's first statement as to the bell's weight was not correct and that he himself sought to correct it by quoting Arthur H. Nichols' later research in actual Revere foundry records. But then, why did the Stickneys, who also worked with Revere records, subsequently come up with 1288

lbs. for that bell, while Nichols only came up with 1260 lbs.?

I suspect the Stickneys' number represented the weight of the bell and its tongue, and Nichols did not include the weight of the tongue. As the Stickneys noted, Paul Revere's son Joseph Warren Revere wrote a memorandum in 1815 which showed what the weight of tongues should be for church bells of various weights. In that list Joseph indicated that a bell weighing 1200 lbs. should have a tongue which weighed 27 to 29 lbs.⁵² Of course, 1260 and 28 equal 1288.

The Stickneys have also noted the following formula Paul Revere wrote in 1798 for making a mold in which to cast a Bell [emphasis mine]: "*The mud for the thickness of Bell, one part **horse dung**, one sand, and one part clay.*"⁵³ Paul Revere died on May 10, 1818. His son Joseph Warren Revere played a major role in the Revere foundry business before and especially after his father died.

An interesting side note concerns Captain Ephraim McFarland, who was responsible for bringing the Revere Bell to Belfast. He captained the schooner "Superb," which was one of the ships that regularly ferried passengers and supplies between Belfast and Boston. McFarland lived at 38 High Street in Belfast. His house was built in 1799 and is now the oldest remaining house on the west side of Belfast Bay. During the War of 1812, a British General occupied McFarland's house for six days while the General's troops occupied the town.⁵⁴

These early Congregationalists were of hardy stock. When First Church is first built in 1818, they see little need for heat in their house of worship. They could brave frigid northern winters for the sake of hearing the gospel preached. Several were the times when the first settled minister in that church building, Rev. William Frothingham, would preach to his flock while wearing a high collared overcoat and mittens.⁵⁵

In early Congregational churches, new born infants were typically brought to church to be baptized the Sunday after their births and even on wintry days when the house of worship was frigid. Communion bread would freeze and rattle on church plates when that sacrament was served.⁵⁶ Women and children were often [but not always due to the fear of starting a fire] allowed the luxury of bringing to church a small tin heater filled with live coals, called a foot stove or foot warmer.⁵⁷ But this was sometimes considered below the dignity of the men. Instead, men would often sit all bundled up and flail their arms and bang their feet together to drive out the numbness. Sometimes the banging was so loud that it interrupted the service, to the dismay of the preacher. Alice Morse Earle tells the following story about such an occurrence:

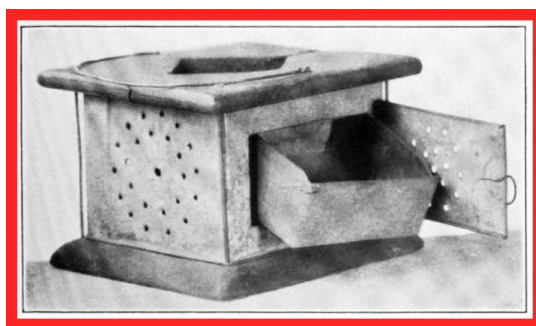
*"Another clergyman was irritated beyond endurance by the stamping, clattering feet, a **supplosio pedis** [stamping with the foot] that he regarded as an irreverent protest and complaint against the severity of the weather, rather than as a hint to him to conclude his long sermon. He suddenly and noisily closed his sermonbook, leaned forward out of his high pulpit, and thundered out these Biblical words of rebuke at his freezing congregation, whose startled faces stared up at him through dense clouds of vapor.*

*'Out of whose womb came the ice? And the hoary frost of heaven, who hath gendered it? The waters are hid as with a stone, and the face of the deep is frozen. Knowest thou the ordinance of heaven? Canst thou set the dominion thereof on earth? Great things doth God which we cannot comprehend. He saith to the snow, Be thou on the earth. But the breath of God frost is given. He causeth it to come, whether for correction, or for his land, or for mercy. Harken unto this. **Stand still**, and consider the wondrous works of God.'*

We can believe that he roared out the words 'stand still,' and there was no more noise in that meeting-house on cold Sundays during the remainder of that year."⁵⁸

On at least one occasion the hot coals of a foot stove got away from a female First Church worthy. For on the floor in front of the church, readily seen before it was carpeted, there is a deep depression burnt out of the floorboard.

The image below is of an American foot warmer.⁵⁹



In 1817, the Evangelical Missionary Society of Massachusetts (EMS), in response to an application from Belfast residents, sent Rev. William Frothingham to Belfast as a missionary, to serve as a religious instructor and teacher of children and youth.⁶⁰ The EMS was formed in 1807 in Massachusetts. Its purpose was to send ministers and teachers to the needy, more recent settlements of New Hampshire, Maine, and Massachusetts.⁶¹

Rev. Frothingham was a Harvard College graduate and by 1817 he had considerable experience serving as a school teacher and a parish minister in other communities. In coming to Belfast, he is named Preceptor of the Belfast Academy for students. He also is employed to conduct worship services at First Church for six months through the winter and spring of 1817-1818.⁶²

Rev. Frothingham's ministry is well received in town. It is during this period that the First Parish society votes to build a meetinghouse and purchase the land for the same. Believing that Rev. Frothingham shares their belief in the Trinity and being eager to fill the ministerial gap which has existed so long in town, since Rev. Alexander Johnson resigned in 1813, members of the First Church in Belfast concur with First Parish members and on May 7, 1818 vote to issue Rev. Frothingham a call to be the settled minister of First Church. Without giving his answer to that call, Rev. Frothingham leaves Belfast and discovers that his wife of fourteen years is ill with consumption.⁶³

To honor the erection of Belfast's new house of worship the Evangelical Missionary Society of Massachusetts arranges for a gift of pewter "sacramental furniture" from the Second Church in Worcester, Massachusetts to be sent to First Church.⁶⁴

The image below is of that Communion set.



As time passes First Church members grow concerned over Rev. Frothingham's long absence and his limited communications with the Church. Also, Church members' concerns about his views on the divinity of Jesus begin to grow.⁶⁵ In December of 1818, Rev. Frothingham finally accepts the Call of First Parish and First Church to be their new settled minister, but he remains away to care for his wife Lois (Barrett) Frothingham, who, he believes, will soon die.⁶⁶

In the early years of Belfast, the town was responsible for overseeing the financial, property, and legal aspects of Belfast's First Church in Belfast, gathered in 1796. That included the operation and maintenance of the meetinghouses, built in 1792, on the west and east sides of town. By town vote, residents on each side of Belfast were to pay for the house of worship on their side. In contrast, the actual covenant members of The First Church in Belfast oversaw their church's spiritual matters, such as its sacraments and the particular covenant and confession of faith First Church used.

Churches in Maine could not be legally incorporated until state law changed in 1891 to allow that.⁶⁷ Part of the reason for that longstanding restriction before 1891 was that following British law, the membership of Maine churches was considered to contain "non persons at law"—namely women and minor children.

Here's an important distinction to keep in mind while tracing the history of The First Church in Belfast. As noted earlier, Belfast Congregationalists organized First Parish as a religious society in 1811, following a change in the law regarding religious societies that same year. First Parish members were then all men. And, it is likely that many of those men were not actual members of First Church, though they were citizens of the town who were interested in supporting First Church's ministry. Once formed, the First Parish religious society became the entity responsible for supporting First Church and its minister. It was also First Parish which voted in 1818 and gathered the funds to build a new house of worship for First Church congregation, a house of worship which First Parish would own and maintain for the church.

Through much of the 18th century in Massachusetts and Maine, Congregational churches typically chose their own clergy and their towns or parishes/societies readily ratified the church's choice. However, that was beginning to change in the early 19th century as towns or parishes/societies began to be seen as having more power than the church they were affiliated with.

This issue finally came to a head when members of a church in Dedham, Massachusetts called a minister it approved of. However, the parish affiliated with that church did not join in that call. Rather, that

parish society called and installed a different minister into that Dedham church. At that, the majority of members in that Dedham church, believing themselves to be the true church, withdrew and claimed that the church building they had been worshiping in, its furnishings, and the church's records they had left behind rightfully belonging to them, not to the parish. This matter was taken to the courts in 1820 and the question put before a jury was which of those two groups, the parish or the majority of church members who withdrew, was the First Church in Dedham and entitled to that property?

In October of that year 1820, the jury arrived at this conclusion: *"when the majority of the members of a Congregational church separate from the majority of the parish, the members who remain, although a minority, constitute the church in such parish, and retain the rights and property belonging thereto."*⁶⁸ That ruling essentially favored the parish at the time of such split and came as a shock to many Congregational church members throughout New England then.

Belfast is subject to a small pox outbreak and scare from about late April to early June of 1819—about the time the Revere bell is hung in the 1818 church. Alarm quickly spreads through Belfast and towns in the vicinity, as cowpox inoculations are sought for the populace. Unwittingly, some of those inoculations are made up from people who are inoculated on April 28, 1819 and seem to be resisting that disease in a healthy way, but then who, quite unexpectedly, are subsequently diagnosed as having developed small pox themselves. It is said that one hundred and fifty people are infected and nine die in the Belfast area due to this disease. The disease is thought to have come from infected pantaloons which were picked up and washed after they drifted ashore on the eastern side of Belfast's Bay from a West Indies ship.⁶⁹

After the death of his wife Lois in Concord, Massachusetts on May 2, 1819,⁷⁰ and having been away from Belfast for about a year, Rev. Frothingham returns to Belfast in May of 1819, during this difficult time.⁷¹

Once Rev. Frothingham returns, the First Parish society, according to Congregational custom at that time, arranges for an Ecclesiastical Council of clergymen to review Rev. Frothingham's fitness for ministry and then, assuming that Council is satisfied, very likely install him into the pastorate of The First Church in Belfast on July 21, 1819. First Church in Belfast members, however, are not satisfied with the First Parish's choice of clergy for that Council, because they suspect that some of those clergy do not believe in the Trinity. First Church members prefer to call their own Installing Council made up of clergymen whose Trinitarian theological views they trust and agree with. But First Parish is determined to continue with its scheduled Council and plan to install Rev. Frothingham on July 21.⁷²

It is to be noted that three of the eight members of First Parish's lead committee were also members of The First Church in Belfast. But, those three are a minority on that committee and their perspective on this matter may not have be the same as that of First Church members as a whole.⁷³

In the weeks and hours before Rev. Frothingham's scheduled Council and likely Installation, the tension grows as First Church members try repeatedly to ascertain and be satisfied with Rev. Frothingham's theological views. The full story of this conflict begs to be told at another time, but the short of it is as follows.

~ The Division ~

Not long before Rev. Frothingham's Council on July 21, 1819 is to begin, First Church members, still unable to be satisfied, finally vote not to hold a Council at that time. Despite that vote, First Parish proceeds with Rev. Frothingham's Council and Installation as planned.⁷⁴ And most First Church members, in accordance with that church's vote, boycott those events. Thus, Rev. Frothingham is installed by First Parish into a brand new house of worship, though most of the member of The First Church in Belfast reject the significance of that installation for them.⁷⁵ As Dr. Herman Abbott wrote of Rev. Frothingham in 1825 or earlier:

*"1819 . . . [Rev. Frothingham] was settled July 21st without a church."*⁷⁶

At that time, The First Church in Belfast had about 50 members, whereas the town of Belfast had about 2000 citizens.⁷⁷ The number of members in the First Parish religious society at that time is not known.⁷⁸ According to a report by the Evangelical Missionary Society of Massachusetts, that new 1818 house of worship in Belfast was "crowded" at the time of Rev. Frothingham's Installation.⁷⁹

On August 12, 1819, not long after his Installation, Rev. Frothingham and a group of five other men gather together to form a new church in connection with First Parish.⁸⁰ That new church is known as the First Parish Church.⁸¹ Though he gives the incorrect date, an ecclesiastical historian of that time period noted that,

*"On the 9th of September following a new Church was formed under the pastoral care of Mr. Frothingham, consisting principally of members of various other churches who had removed into town. The old Church still continue as a distinct body."*⁸²

Members of the withdrawn First Church in Belfast are reluctant to give up their claim to First Parish's newly built house of worship in Belfast, but on May 20, 1820, after renewed efforts to resolve the situation with Rev. Frothingham fail, they secede from their affiliation with First Parish and First Parish's minister and form their own religious society, which they call "The Congregational Society associated with The First Church in Belfast."⁸³

In 1822, a small meetinghouse called "The Conference House" is built on Primrose Hill for the members of The First Church in Belfast.⁸⁴ But that is a temporary arrangement, for a new house of worship known as the North Church is built on Belfast's Market Street and dedicated on February 14, 1832 as that congregation's new home.⁸⁵ Rev. Frothingham's church becomes identified as being Unitarian, whereas the First Church's congregation in the North Church maintains its Trinitarian Congregational orientation and comes to be popularly known as the Orthodox or North Church. As noted in Joseph Williamson's history, even as late as 1852, the First Parish religious society is sometimes referred to as the First Congregational Society (Unitarian).⁸⁶

In its publication of November and December 1819, the Evangelical Missionary Society does not mention this division at all. Rather, it makes this report:

“We consider the instrumentality of this Society in the establishment, during the last year, of the Rev. Mr. Frothingham, at Belfast, in the District of Maine, as a signal smile of divine providence. In him we repose high confidence as a man of knowledge, a sound theologian, a pattern of Christian prudence and charity, and as one who will, by his enlightened and zealous instructions and corresponding example, shed a general lustre on pure and undefiled religion. Some of our members who aided in his installation, give the most encouraging views of the prosperity and prospects of the religious society in that place, and they will probably stand in no farther need of our charity.”⁸⁷

Fortunately, the congregations of both churches begin to come together in 1921 and eventually merged and incorporated as The First Church in Belfast in 1925. In so doing, they make Belfast’s beautiful, 1818 Asher Benjamin styled house of worship, the church home they both share.

I now continue the story of this splendid 1818 house of worship. For about the next century, it continued to be owned by the First Parish religious society and worshipped in by the First Parish Church (Unitarian), which Rev. Frothingham had a role in gathering in 1819.

Unitarianism in America initially emerged from the liberal wing of Congregationalism. And even though the theology of Unitarian churches regarding the identity of Jesus came to be seen as distinctly different from Trinitarian Congregational churches, Unitarian churches, in terms of their church government, style of worship, and houses of worship, evolved in many of the same ways Congregational churches did as both groups moved toward the 21st century.

A choir soon participated in worship services of the First Parish Church, held in the new 1818 church building. That choir most likely sang from the church’s gallery. Congregational and Unitarian church choirs in this period typically sang from what was sometimes called the “singing seats” in a front row of their church’s gallery.

We know of this early choir at the First Parish Church, because in 1820 a letter to the editor in the Belfast area’s *Hancock Gazette* began to complain that this choir was deficient in both ability and performance. While not questioning the integrity of the choir members, the plea was made that a sacred concert be held in order to raise money to start a singing school and buy music books. Apparently that choir was not insulted, because in a few weeks they wrote their own letter to the editor of that paper. In their letter they essentially concurred with the assessments and suggestions of the previous letter writer.⁸⁸

Musical accompaniment at the First Parish Church followed the tradition in that era of using a bass viol. At that time, violins were typically prohibited from Congregational churches because they smacked too much of the tavern house. In contrast, bass viols were unabashedly accepted as “Lord’s Fiddles.” Like choirs in this period, bass viol players usually contributed their music to worship from their church’s gallery.⁸⁹

On August 10, 1826, the sanctuary of the First Parish Church was somberly draped in black. The solemn occasion was to commemorate the deaths of both Thomas Jefferson and John Adams the previous July 4th. Both ex-Presidents died 50 years to the day after the signing of the

"Declaration of Independence." Thirty-eight officers and soldiers of the Revolutionary War and many Maine dignitaries were present for the black arm band procession which began at the town's Congregational Church and ended in First Parish's sanctuary where a community service was held. Members of the procession sat in the main body of pews on the first floor. The wall pews on the first floor and the front seats in the gallery were open for the ladies.⁹⁰

In 1835, the bass viol in this church was replaced by an organ. As is recorded in the church's records, the first organ shipped from Boston was lost in a shipwreck. But fortunately, these clever Yankees had purchased it C.O.D. Two months after the first organ's demise, a second one created by Henry Erben of New York was purchased for \$710 and made it safely from Boston to be installed, presumably in the church's gallery.⁹¹

In 1836, with the permission of the First Parish society, the town clock, built by Timothy Chase and Phineas P. Quimby, was placed in the church's belfry.⁹²

The image below is of the Belfast town clock as it appears today in the belfry of The First Church in Belfast. It wasn't unusual in the early 1800's for a town to put its clock in the steeple of a centrally located church in town, for a church was often a town's tallest structure. That way the largest number of people around the town might be able to read one of the clock's multiple faces.



Three years after the installation of this clock, there was the following complaint responded to by the local newspaper, the *'Republican Journal'*:

"The Town Clock.— Week before last a communication appeared in the Journal complaining of the irregularity of the Town Clock. By some it is thought the writer intended to make a personal thrust at the builders of the clock. If such was the fact we pronounce the attempt contemptible. The writer, however, denies it, and says the object was simply to excite the town to keep the clock in repair. Messrs. Timothy Chase and P. P. Quimby, who made the Clock, are acknowledged by all to be first rate workmen, and no man, in the community where they are known, will charge them with attempting to shuffle off on to the town an article inferior to that which they agreed to set up. The facts are, the Bell Deck of the Meeting House leaks like a riddling sieve and at every rain the clock

is wet. Besides this the boys have free access to it, and the way they tinker it is not of much service. Whose to blame? Surely not Chase and Quimby.”⁹³

Rev. Aaron Merrick Colton, a Congregational minister, wrote the following about the old Vermont meetinghouse he experienced as a boy in the years 1812 to 1820.

*“No chapel of ease this. No fire in winter, except the many in the foot-stoves. Not one cushion in the house. The people meant to ‘endure hardness.’”*⁹⁴

And, so it was at first in Belfast’s 1818 church; such hardness was endured. But then, as times changed, the demand for comfort on Sabbath days increased all across New England. It is recorded that in 1825 the First Parish hired for \$10 a year, one Charles Clark to take care of the church, to sweep its steps, and to attend to the fires for one year. Apparently, the church had installed one or two stoves by then to warm up its sanctuary.

In 1837 the church began using coal which was specially shipped to Belfast from Boston.⁹⁵ As one worshipper recalled, there were *“two small stoves near the side doors, with long funnels extending the entire length of the side aisles, with a drip pan underneath to catch the creosote.”*

The picture below is of the Church of Christ, Unitarian in Lancaster, Massachusetts. It was designed by Charles Bulfinch and built in 1816. The picture shows the stove pipes which still exist in that church. Two wood stoves are at the back of the sanctuary. As noted by the red arrows, the smoke is vented out of the building with the pipes running below the balcony on two sides, then up the front wall of the sanctuary and then out, above the roof.⁹⁶ First Church’s stoves and “funnels,” noted above, probably were set up in a similar fashion.



Belfast historian Joseph Williamson noted that in 1848 First Parish Church replaced its old organ with a Stevens Tracker Organ which *“cost thirteen hundred dollars, the old instrument selling for four hundred dollars.”*⁹⁷

However, it was the August 3, 1849 edition of the local *Republican Journal* newspaper which announced the purchase and placement of that new organ in Belfast's Unitarian Church (First Parish Church). The *Journal* also indicated that organ was similar to the highly regarded Stevens Tracker Organ which already existed in Belfast's Universalist Church. Below is the text of that news article.

*"CHURCH ORGANS. – The Unitarian Society of this town have placed in their Church a new organ, from the manufactory of Mr. Geo. Stevens, of Cambridge, Mass. 'Mr. S. Manufactured the organ for the Universalist house, which was regarded the best in the State. Both were constructed for the two societies with conformity to the sizes of the two churches, and are much alike in point of excellence and tone.'"*⁹⁸

As this was in the days before electricity, the immense Stevens Tracker Organ needed to be pumped by hand. The First Church in Belfast still has that organ and you can still see the lever once used for pumping it on the organ's right side. In those early days (and even into the 20th century) young boys were tapped for this job. You can see what they preoccupied themselves with between hymns. The balcony floor beneath that pump lever is covered with wood carvings. In addition to a whole "alphabet soup" of initials, there is even the outline of a sailing ship carved in the floor—and a more recent picture of a space ship.

The images below are of the Stevens Tracker organ and some of the wood carvings on a step beneath that organ's pump handle.



In 1843, the First Parish Church was first carpeted. Its pews were also painted. That same year, the First Parish religious society allowed Oakes Angier to build, at his own expense, a vestry building behind the First Parish Church. In 1843 that building was used for some Sunday evening revival services. Referred to as the Unitarian Vestry, that building housed a singing school for ladies and gentlemen in 1849. In 1859 that building was moved to Bridge Street where it was used as a

school house.⁹⁹

Concern over their minister's housing led members of the First Parish Church and its affiliated First Parish society to form the Unitarian Parsonage Proprietary, which was incorporated.¹⁰⁰ With receipts from stocks issued by this Proprietary, a parsonage for this church was built in 1856 at 7 Church St.¹⁰¹

The image below is of the First Parish Church's parsonage at 7 Church St., which is now privately owned.



In 1860, the grounds around the First Parish Church were graded and a fence was put in.¹⁰²

The Civil War began on April 12, 1861, when Confederate forces attacked Fort Sumter in South Carolina. When newly inaugurated President Abraham Lincoln then called for troops to fight that war, a number of Belfast men volunteered. Before they left to serve the Union cause, they and clergy from the area gathered at the First Parish Church on Sunday, May 12, 1861, for a dedication and commissioning service. The pulpit was draped in an American flag.¹⁰³ Rev. Cazneau Palfrey, who was the minister of the church at that time, later wrote this remembrance of that service:

"It was the most solemn and interesting occasion on which I ever officiated. Many of those young men attended church that day for the last time. They were going never to return. I preached with very mingled feelings. I had no doubt of the justness of the cause or its final triumph, but I shuddered at the thought of the bloodshed, misery and death which were immediately to ensue."

In 1868, 50 years after the church was built, \$2,000 was appropriated to accomplish several major changes. Many of those changes took place over a two month period, beginning in January of that year.¹⁰⁴ The massive pillars beneath the galleries, which had been festooned with greens as early as 1838 to celebrate Christmas, were replaced by steel rods which suspended the galleries from the ceiling. This allowed for more room for pews on the floor of the church. New doors, larger panes of glass in the windows, blinds for those windows, new carpets, and gas for lighting were

installed.¹⁰⁵ In this year, a furnace was also installed out of sight in the basement of the First Parish Church, paid for by the women of the church.¹⁰⁶ At this time, the church's stoves and funnels in the sanctuary likely were removed, as they were no longer needed.

Certainly the most dramatic change in 1868 was the removal of the large box pews and their replacement with the pews of white ash which are still in today's First Church in Belfast. Those 1868 pews are of the style known as "slip pews." Justification for them was that they were fashionable and could accommodate many more people. Joseph Williamson reported that with these new pews the number of pews in the First Parish Church sanctuary was increased by 20.¹⁰⁷

New England churches appear to have begun moving gradually to slip pews at the beginning of the 19th century. Slip pews allow everyone to sit in a line facing the pulpit, in contrast to box pews in which people sit facing in different directions, some even with their backs to the pulpit. The image below is of those 1868 slip pews as they appear in today's First Church in Belfast. In viewing this picture you will note that relatively narrow pillars have been built back in under the church's galleries/balcony—apparently instead of continuing to have those steel rods which were installed in 1868. Those pillars also support the steel beam which was installed in the 1980's to give additional support to the balcony and organ above it.



Here's a tale which was related by Mrs. James Frederick who was affiliated with the First Parish Church since her birth in 1833. It seems that the church might have adopted slip pews earlier in its history except for this occurrence. She wrote:

"Among the parishioners was a worthy but eccentric gentleman, a good tax payer who, with his wife, a cultivated literary lady (who was nothing if not stout) were constant attendants at church. The aforesaid gentleman arose and vigorously protested against the proposed change. This was a blow from an unexpected quarter. After considerable discussion the

chairman or moderator said: 'Squire (____), will you state your objection.' (I omit the expletives that preceded his answer, as they would be entirely out of place here.)

'Yes, Sir! I will, sir! If those pews are two inches smaller Sir, (my wife) can't get in.' This closed the argument, the motion was lost, and for several years (his wife) got in on the same old plan as far as the pews were concerned."

The Christmas Eve service of 1868 was dramatic, for in the new fashion which was then sweeping the country, the First Parish Church was, for the first time, lit with gas. Fixtures with three globes projected out from the balcony and along the front wall of the sanctuary. Mrs. James Frederick of the church also related this anecdote:

"At the close of the Rev. Mr. Utter's ministry (in 1874), while the pulpit was supplied each week by strangers, a somewhat ludicrous incident occurred . . . there was to be an evening service. At that time a single gas jet in the wall on each side of the pulpit helped to make the darkness more visible, and as they were not connected with the other pipes had to be lighted separately by means of climbing a short ladder. In order to protect the wallpaper, the provident Janitor had drawn on the ends of the ladder a huge pair of blue woolen stockings, which were a decided misfit.

On this particular evening, just before the hour of commencing, someone had discovered the lights had not been turned on. What was to be done? . . . the Janitor . . . was instructed to go in as quietly as possible, light the gas and come out . . . Invested with his official authority, he hoisted that ladder with those stockings fluttering . . . and started up the center aisle and as if that 'hook and ladder' parade were not enough, he began soliloquizing in quite an audible tone . . . He lighted the gas on one side, then shouldered the ladder, marched across and lighted the other, muttering all the while, then took up his line of march for the door, with the stockings still uppermost.

This was too much for the audience, they could not contain themselves, they were on the verge of hysterics and could not calmly listen to any sort of discourse. What became of that poor minister I never knew."

The next period of remodeling came in 1878. Although several years previous the towering pulpit in the church had been lowered at least once, attention was now being paid to the following problem. The minister was having difficulty finding enough light by which to read his manuscript. Apparently, the original builders of the 1818 church did not follow Asher Benjamin's design and the practice of many meetinghouses and early churches in that period of having a large window directly behind the pulpit.

It seems that during the morning services the major source of light available to the pulpit came from the two gallery windows on the front wall of that church. Unfortunately, when the shades on those gallery windows were not pulled, the sun would stream in and blind several of the parishioners. It seemed an impasse. The solution lay in the church hiring a craftsman to design a chancel.

When the craftsman's proposed design was found unacceptable, the church's minister, Rev. James Bixby, drafted his own plan which was found acceptable. Subsequently, the present recess with its high clerestory windows was added on to the front wall of the church.

At the same time the old pulpit was removed and the present pillars and black walnut pulpit were installed. Mrs. Frederick wrote that those pillars are smaller replicas of the massive pillars which once supported the gallery. On the top of the posts on either side of the pulpit one may be able to see holes. Those holes originally supported gas light fixtures.

Below is a picture taken of First Church's sanctuary in 2013. Notice how lighted the chancel is from the light coming in above from its upper clerestory windows. Notice also the light that is coming in from the windows above the balcony on either side of the chancel.



There is a curious "tempest in a teapot" which accompanied this re-modeling in 1878. The pulpit chairs were purchased and the question was hotly debated whether or not cushions should be put in them or whether they should be left bare. Apparently, the opinion of the one person who would use them, the minister, was not sought. Cushions were not provided and the minister to protect himself from being frozen to the chair in the winter, on several occasions sat on his coat. After several winters of this discontent, the congregation saw the light and reluctantly ordered just one cushion. In time, two others appeared.

The following picture is of those pulpit chairs of 1878—but with cushions.



During the remodeling of 1878, the benches and pews of the balcony were finally dispensed with. Being a thrifty people those old pews were saved and you can still see many of them in a cut-down condition. Today they line the wall of the balcony as ready-made wainscoting.

The picture below is of wainscoting in the gallery created from First Church's early box pews.



Over the years, the church's sanctuary walls have been variously adorned. From bare wood they quickly progressed to white plaster. From there, they went to paint and at least one layer of wallpaper which is known to have been a cold-looking pearl white. Paints--pink, blue, green, and white are more recent. On two occasions, the church's sanctuary likely was bordered with geometric stencils. It's possible that a man named Cochrane, who did the stenciling in the Superior Court house in town, also applied his skills to this sanctuary. A picture of some of that sanctuary stenciling appears in Caroline F. Dunton's booklet "*First Church in Belfast, Maine, 1796-1946*," first published in 1946.¹⁰⁸

In 1879, the ladies of the First Parish Church furnished the tower room over the vestibule as a parlor. In later years, that tower room has been used as a dining hall, a meeting room, and an activity room for young people. And more recently it became a chapel dedicated to Rev. Skerrye, a beloved minister who served The First Church in Belfast at the time of its federation and subsequent merger and incorporation in 1925. There was a time when the coatroom downstairs at the left side of the vestibule was a kitchen. Evidence of its existence can still be seen today as in its S.E. corner there is a "dumb waiter" which leads upstairs to the tower room. It's been said that the tower room once had stenciled on its wall, this Unitarian creed:

"I believe in the Fatherhood of God, the brotherhood of man and the leadership of Jesus and onward and upward forever and ever."

Looking out the front of the church onto Church Street, from windows in today's tower room. Notice the knotted bell rope which is used to ring First Church's Paul Revere Bell.



In 1880, the Young Ladies' Sewing Society of the First Parish Church used the proceeds from their many fund raising efforts to buy the church's parsonage at 7 Church Street from the stockholders of the Unitarian Parsonage Proprietary which had built that parsonage in 1856 and still owned it. In turn, that sewing society gave that parsonage to the First Parish religious society, so that parsonage was now directly under the control of the society which was basically responsible for the financial well being and properties used by the First Parish Church.¹⁰⁹

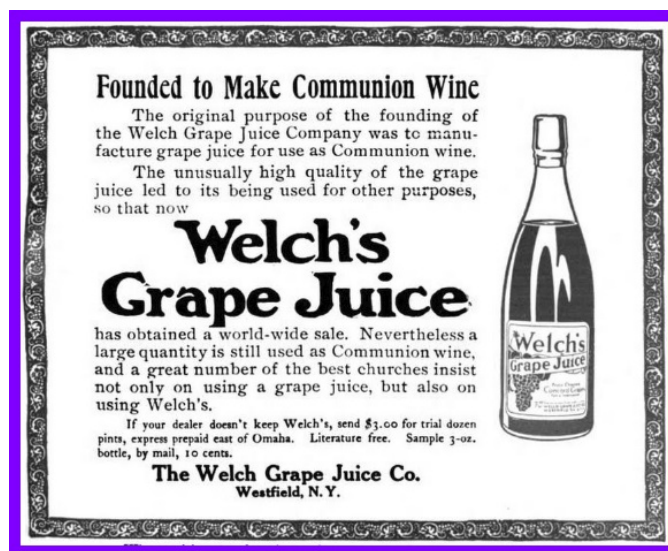
An important development came out of this generous action by the Ladies' Sewing Society. It seems that because the ladies did so much for the church financially and otherwise, that the men

of the First Parish religious society began to be concerned that by Maine state law at that time, women were denied legal membership in religious parishes/societies like their own. Accordingly, an annual meeting of the First Parish religious society voted to ask the Maine State Legislature to legally authorize women to be members of such parishes/societies. Thanks to that initiative, such a landmark law was passed on February 26, 1881 allowing women, for the first time, to become full members of any religious parish/society in Maine.¹¹⁰

When did The First Parish Church and North Church move to individual cups instead of a common cup at the sacrament of Holy Communion? That is not known at present, however, the likelihood is that transition took place near the turn of the 20th century. In the 1870's and 1880's many Congregational churches began to use unfermented grape juice instead of wine at Communion, in part because they didn't want to tempt "reformed" men who were coming to church. Many of those churches had been supporting the Temperance movement since the 1830's and were very aware of the damage alcohol could do to families.¹¹¹

As it happened, in 1869 physician and dentist Thomas Bramwell Welch invented a way of pasteurizing grape juice so fermentation was stopped and the drink had no alcohol. He then encouraged churches to use his product as "unfermented wine" for their Communion services.

Here is a 1910 advertisement for Dr. Welch's grape juice, dubbed "Communion Wine," which appeared in a magazine called *The Homiletic Review*, which was published particularly for clergy.¹¹²



In the 1890's people became more aware of the role of germs and viruses in causing diseases. An "Individual Cup Movement" began in that decade. It enlisted the support of doctors to call the attention of clergy and their parishioners to the very "unhygienic" nature of the common cup often used at the sacrament of Holy Communion. One of the earliest churches to begin using individual Communion cups for sanitary reasons was the First Congregational Church of Sac, Maine— January 1894. Perhaps the earliest church to adopt that approach was the Scovill Avenue Methodist Episcopal Church of Cleveland, Ohio—December 1891?"¹¹³ As the Individual Cup Movement spread, particularly among Protestant churches, some companies began to make Communion trays

with small, individual glass cups, which they promoted by stressing their sanitary nature.

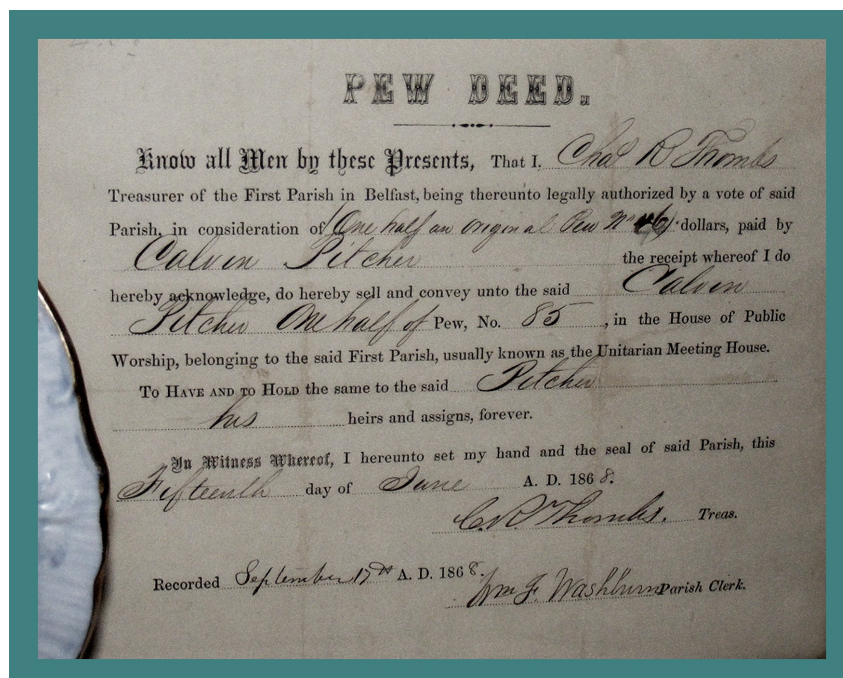
The picture below on the left is of a 1900 advertisement of the Sanitary Communion Outfit Co., in a Presbyterian magazine.¹¹⁴ The picture below on the right is one of several such communion trays which was given by a parishioner, presumably a particularly health conscious parishioner, to the First Congregational Church in Falmouth, Massachusetts in that same period. Falmouth was not the only church at that time to receive such a gift. Perhaps it was such a gift from a parishioner in that period which led Belfast's First Parish Church and North Church to begin using individual cups for their services of Holy Communion?



Congregational religious societies in the early 19th century typically sold or hired (rented) the pews on the main floor of their church's sanctuary. Pew deeds were issued to those who purchased them. Quite often, almost all of the pews on the main floor were sold. Visitors to the church usually sat in the church's galleries.

Such was long the case in Belfast's 1818 church.

Even when slip pews were installed in the First Parish Church in 1868, they were numbered and sold, as indicated in the image of a pew deed to the right, dated June 15, 1868. This deed appears to be giving Calvin Pitcher, one-half of the new slip pew no. 85, in exchange for one-half the church's original box pew no. 46 which he owned, but which no longer existed in the First Parish Church by June of that year. As the deed indicates, Mr. Pitcher and his heirs and assigns are to have and to hold this new pew forever.



It may be helpful to know some of the legal standards in Massachusetts and likely in Maine in those days, as related to church pews. If a meetinghouse/church was no longer fit for use, a parish/society could build a new one and those who had deeds to pews in the old, discarded building would not usually be compensated by that parish/society for their loss. However, if a parish/society decided to replace old pews with new ones in a building still fit for worship, those old pew owners usually were offered some compensation from that society/parish for their loss.¹¹⁵ It seems likely that all old box pew owners in the First Parish Church in 1868, including Mr. Pitcher, were offered as compensation, the transfer of their old pew ownership to one of their church's new slip pews of about the same value.

Once pews were sold, some religious societies also exacted a yearly tax on the pew owners. Many religious societies also levied a yearly tax on the estates and polls of those who were members of their society. Societies often elected and paid for the services of an assessor who would appraise the value of each society member's estate to be taxed on. The yearly poll tax was usually a set amount for society members. Thus, religious societies maintained their church building and property, paid the church's minister, and provided music for the church's choir through some combination of taxes on society members and pew purchases/taxes/rentals.¹¹⁶

At this time, there often was no offering taken at a Congregational church's worship service to support the church.¹¹⁷ This system of support for a church through its society/parish was largely a closed system. In practice, it was largely the same people and families, who were members of the religious society/parish and/or pew owners, paying whatever rate of taxation was calculated for them to pay in any given year.

As the 20th century approached, many Congregational societies and churches [after their incorporation] began turning away from this longstanding, relatively closed system of supporting their church. Instead, they began to seek and depend upon funding derived from yearly pledges which were freely made by anyone who wanted to support their church. And, along with this change came these two changes. Offering envelopes began to be made available for the use of those who made such free pledges. Also, a time to collect such offerings was added to Sunday morning worship services and an emphasis was placed on the sacredness and importance of everyone supporting their church and its ministry for God.

Also, two additional changes came to many Congregational churches in this period. Some churches began to see that more pews on the main floor of their sanctuary were available for rent. And, some societies/churches [after their incorporation] even bought back pews they had previously sold, in order to have them available to rent to newcomers, people they hoped to attract to their church. Given such changes, many churches, not just those in large cities, began to feel the need to have ushers at worship who could help people quickly locate the specific pew they had rented and avoid unfortunate "*you're sitting in my pew!*" encounters.

The other change was that societies/churches began experimenting with, then eventually adopting a system of free pews. Though it didn't decide this issue, a common argument against free pews at that time was that free pews would break up families, if they came to church and found that some of their usual seating together was already occupied. It appears that while the transition to free pews was a quick one in some Congregational churches, for others it was a gradual transition as they

dealt with varied and confusing sanctuary seating, which consisted of a virtual checkerboard pattern of still owned pews, rented pews, and free pews. Ushers really had their work cut out for them back then.

Even as recently as 1919, a Miss Celia L. Rogers gave a church pew back to the Congregational society in Falmouth, Massachusetts, but with the stipulation that it be a “free seat” and that no one be charged by that church’s society for sitting in it.¹¹⁸ When the First Parish Church and North Church congregations began to worship together in 1921 in the 1818 church building, the stipulation was that all its pews would be free. It’s not known at present if the First Parish society bought back any pews from their owners at that time or earlier, so that all the pews in the First Parish Church could be considered free to sit in, in 1921.

In 1911, First Parish Church celebrated the 100th anniversary of the formation of First Parish, the religious society which built and continued to maintain the church’s beautiful 1818 house of worship through the years. As irony would have it, the occasion was memorable for more than one reason. It seems that the gas lights, which were 43 years old by this time, had just been replaced with the newest electrical fixtures. Clergy and parishioners from all around the town gathered for this evening celebration, eager to see the new illumination. Yet, so much for 100 years of progress. As the church’s minister at that time, Rev. Adolph Rossbach, wrote of that event:

"The plans worked admirably up until 7:30pm. When almost like a crash out of a clear sky came a deluge of rain, the greatest precipitation which the region had experienced in a generation. About thirty loyal and courteous people from our own and sister churches made their way through this pelting, drenching storm and sang our opening hymn in wet garments. The speaker of the evening had reached the point in his address where we were beginning to get some idea of what he had come so far to say, when another crash of thunder put the whole building in total and irreparable darkness."

The picture to the right, from the 1913 Volume II of Joseph Williamson’s history of Belfast, shows the First Parish Church’s sanctuary in 1912, with its electric lights, large cross behind the pulpit, and stenciling [though hard to see in this image] along the wall beneath the galleries.¹¹⁹

Perhaps the cross in the sanctuary at that time was added during the 1878 remodeling of the sanctuary? Its early appearance in this sanctuary is interesting, because, generally speaking, it doesn’t seem that many Congregational churches [at least] began to add crosses to their sanctuaries until the 1930’s.



FIRST PARISH, UNITARIAN CHURCH. INTERIOR IN 1912

~ The Reunification ~

About one hundred years after Belfast's Congregational and Unitarian churches had separated, they began to come together again.¹²⁰ As it happened, in 1921 the ministers of both First Parish Church and North Church left. As neither church had a minister then and neither church was strong financially or in numbers, the idea of joining together in a federation was considered and adopted by both churches by Sunday, September 25, 1921.¹²¹

Though federated, each church still maintained its own separate legal identity. Once that federation was adopted, the two congregations met together jointly for Sunday services and Sunday School in the First Parish Church. Sunday services were no longer held in the North Church. And, as stipulated in the Articles of Federation, the pew seats in the First Parish Church were free.

On January 8, 1922, a new minister, Rev. William F. Skerrye, a Unitarian, was elected to serve the newly formed federated church, which was called The First Church (Federated) in Belfast, Maine.¹²² On October 23, 1923, the following new Covenant was adopted for this church.

"We, who together, do hold the purpose of promoting the highest interests of our community, and of mankind, do agree in accepting this as the sufficient covenant of our faith and practice as members of The First Church in Belfast, Maine."

*"Believing in the progressive revelation of truth and in the increasing knowledge of the principles of righteousness taught and practiced by Jesus Christ, we as disciples of his spirit in all human affairs, unite for the worship of God, and the service of man."*¹²³

The Articles of Federation allowed for either church to withdraw from this federation after one year, but neither did. Instead, both churches adjusted to being reunited after a century of being divided.

Then, on **August 24, 1925** a dramatic thing happened. On that day the two churches were incorporated together as one church, **The First Church in Belfast**. Thus, the federation established between them in 1921 was superseded.¹²⁴ A change in the laws of Maine in 1891 had allowed Maine churches to become, for the first time, legally incorporated entities.¹²⁵ A great advantage of incorporation was that it allowed this one church, now created from the two churches, to own its own property and handle its own legal affairs, without being dependent on a religious society/parish for such things. Though it would take time, the final step needed to complete this merger of the two churches was for their respective religious societies to transfer all assets they held to The First Church in Belfast.

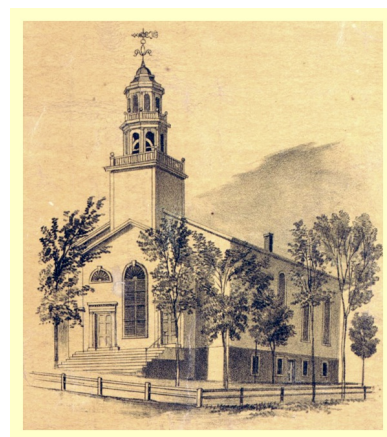
The Congregational year-book in 1926, soon after the merger of the two churches, shows The First Church in Belfast as having the following: 150 members [32 men, 118 women] and 200 families.¹²⁶ The Congregational year-book in 1925, with statistics before the merger of the churches, shows the North Church alone as having: 94 members [18 men, 76 women], and 121 families.¹²⁷

Noting the difference in those figures, it appears that the First Parish Church likely had somewhere

in the vicinity of 56 members and 79 families before the merger. First Parish Church seems, at that point, to have been somewhat smaller numerically than the North Church. U.S. censuses indicated that Belfast had 5,083 residents in 1920 and 4,993 residents in 1930.¹²⁸

Though difficult for many former North Church members, an important part of the transfer of assets process was the sale about 1926 of the North Church building to the Frank D. Hazeltine American Legion Post #43. Frank Durham Hazeltine had been affiliated with the First Parish Church. He was a Lieutenant in the 101st U.S. Infantry and was killed in action during World War I.

The image to the right is of Belfast's North Church (Congregational) as it appeared in an 1855 map of Waldo County, Maine, and before an addition was built on the front of it.¹²⁹



In 1926, a two story Parish House was built behind The First Church in Belfast to serve the now expanded congregation it was serving.

The image below is a modern picture of that Parish House.



In a Superior Court process which took place from 1936 to 1938, all assets of the religious societies long affiliated with the First Parish Church and the North Church were finally transferred legally to The First Church in Belfast. In 1938, First Church's new Parish House, which cost about \$25,000 when it was built in 1926, was fully paid for. Those two religious societies subsequently went out of existence and likely soon after they transferred all their assets to The First Church in Belfast. And, that is what typically happened in that period when such a parish/society was no longer needed to manage property and funds for a Congregational church.

One last story. During my ministry in Belfast (1976-1987), it was customary to temporarily store pine cones, reindeer moss, and other decorative natural items in the balcony, in preparation for the church's annual fall wreath trimming project. Parishioners decorated those wreathes for Christmas and sold them far and wide as a fund raising project for the church. One Sunday, while preaching a sermon, I suddenly heard strange noises coming from the balcony. It sounded like nuts or pine cones be rolled back and forth. We assumed it was squirrels and set "have-a-heart" traps for them. But, although those traps were sprung and the bait was stolen, no squirrels were caught.

Then we discovered that candles at a worship center in the Tower Room had been mysteriously bent and chewed down. Then, our organist complained that his organ pedal playing shoes, which he customarily left all week beside the organ, had suddenly disappeared. Then, worst of all, it was discovered that metal pipes in the church's precious Stevens Tracker Organ were being "*chewed, bent, and several actually removed from their sockets.*"¹³⁰ It was a mystery as we all wondered, what squirrel would do that?

At that point, by dusting a surface near the organ, I discovered the tracks of the critter doing all that damage. It was a racoon. And then Trustee and harbor pilot Bill Abbott finally caught it and let it go far away from the church. As church member Roger M. Woodbury wrote about this event in 1980:

"Why the racoon attacked the organ pipes may never be known. Some contend that it just didn't care for organ music while others surmise that the metal pipes had some special flavor which appealed to the taste buds of the beast."

As I recall, it cost about \$1,000 to get those many damaged organ pipes replaced or fixed. And, the organist's shoes? They were found sometime later, where the racoon had left them, under the floor boards of the balcony.

I end my history with this comment. With a beautiful, historic church such as The First Church in Belfast, one may often feel tempted to cling to its past and despise all change. However, a revelation comes when one realizes, in looking closely at its history, that much that we have taken as being original in it was itself once changed.

This year First Church is celebrating the 200th anniversary of its sanctuary building. But, who knows? One hundred years from now, some minister may well step into First Church's pulpit—the present one or a different one—to address her/his congregation in wondering, "*What was our First Church in Belfast like in 2018—two hundred years after it was built?*"

May the blessing of God rest upon the generations of faithful whose lives are nurtured, yesterday, today, and tomorrow in this, a living house of God's worship. Amen.

July 27, 2018

Rev. Dr. Douglas K. Shavette

The window below seems to look out with a smile upon Belfast and the world from the front of The First Church in Belfast. It is my favorite old window which I've always remembered in this historic church.



ENDNOTES

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2. Clark, Calvin Montague, History of the Individual Churches, 1600-1826, *History of the Congregational Churches in Maine*, vol. 2, (Portland, Maine: The Congregational Christian Conference of Maine, 1935), 312-314.
3. Williamson, Joseph, *The History of The City of Belfast in the State of Maine, From Its First Settlement in 1770 to 1875*, vol. 1, (Portland, Maine: Loring, Short, and Harmon, 1877), 226.
4. First Parish, Hingham, Old Ship Church, Unitarian Universalist. "History," Accessed July 2, 2018. <http://www.oldshipchurch.org/history.html>
5. Benes, Peter, *Meetinghouses of Early New England*, (Amherst and Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2012), 204-208.
6. Showalter, Douglas K., *Chapters on the History of the First Congregational Church of Falmouth, Massachusetts of the United Church of Christ*, (Self-published, 2010), 210-211.
7. Abbott, Dr. Herman, *History of Belfast, Maine, to 1825*, Intro. and Notes by Joseph Williamson, Reprinted from the *Republican Journal* of Jan. 25, Feb. 1, Feb. 8, and Feb. 15, 1900, (Belfast, Miss Grace E. Burgess, 1900), 12.
~ Williamson, *The History of The City*, vol. 1, 278.
8. Williamson, *The History of The City*, vol. 1, 259.
9. Williamson, *The History of The City*, vol. 1, 260.
10. After their church burned down from a lightning strike in 1864, a new church in a Gothic style was built in 1865 for the South Parish church in Augusta, Maine. That new church was constructed of granite and is said to have no less than six lighting rods to prevent another lighting strike.
Kennebec Journal, Morning Sentinel, "South Parish Congregational Church in Augusta celebrates building's 150th anniversary" (June 13, 2106). Accessed July 3, 2018.
<https://www.centralmaine.com/2016/06/13/south-parish-congregational-church-in-augusta-celebrates-buildings-150th-anniversary/>
11. The First Church in Belfast has long cited December 29, 1796 as the date of its gathering. That seems to be in accordance with Belfast historian Joseph Williamson's assessment that First Church's organization was completed on the 29th day of that month. In contrast, both John Greenleaf and Congregational historian Calvin Montague Clark cite the previous day, December 28, the time of the Ecclesiastical Council meeting in Belfast, as the date of First Church's gathering.
~ Williamson, *The History of The City*, vol. 1, 238.

~ Greenleaf, Jonathan, *Sketches of the Ecclesiastical History of the State of Maine: From the Earliest Settlement to the Present Time*, (Portsmouth, New Hampshire: Harrison Gray, 1821), 167.

~ Clark, *History of the Congregational Churches*, vol. 2, 313.

12. Greenleaf, *Sketches of the Ecclesiastical History*, 167.

13. Fowler, John William, *An Historical Sketch and Genealogical Record of the Fowlers of Milford, CT.*, (New Haven, Conn: The Stafford Printing Co., 1887), 13.

14. Chapter VI, An act respecting Public Worship and Religious Freedom, passed June 18, 1811, in *Laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Passed at The Several Sessions of the General Court Holden in Boston, Beginning 31st May, 1809, and Ending on the 29th February, 1812*, vol. 5, (Boston: Adams, Rhoades, & Co., 1812), 387-389.

http://lldc.mainelegislature.org/Open/Mass/1806-1820/Mass_1811_05_Laws.pdf

~ Williamson, *The History of The City*, vol.1, 257.

15. Section 2 of the Act respecting Public Worship and Religious Freedom, passed June 18, 1811, stipulated the following:

“Sec. 2. Be it further enacted, That whenever any person shall become a member of any religious society, corporate or uncorporate, within this Commonwealth, such membership shall be certified by a committee of such society, chosen for this purpose, and filed with the Clerk of the town where he dwells, such person shall forever afterwards be exempted from taxation of the support of public worship and public teachers of religion in every other religious corporation whatsoever, so long as he shall continue such membership.”

<http://archives.lib.state.ma.us/actsResolves/1811/1811acts0006.pdf>

~ Clark, *History of the Congregational Churches*, vol. 2, 354.

16. Williamson, *The History of The City*, vol.1, 258.

17. Williamson, *The History of The City*, vol.1, 140, 259-260.

18. Dr. Abbott Herman, who was alive during the building of First Church, indicated that its frame was raised on June 10-11, 1818. Belfast historian Joseph Williamson (1828-1902) wrote in 1877, that First Church's frame was raised on June 13, 1818.

~ Abbott, *History of Belfast*, 12.

~ Williamson, *The History of The City*, vol.1, 258.

19. Williamson, *The History of The City*, vol.1, 260.

20. Benjamin, Asher, *The Country Builder's Assistant: Containing A Collection of New Designs of Carpentry and Architecture; Which will be particularly useful, to Country Workmen in general*, (Greenfield, Massachusetts, 1797), plate 27, reprint (Bedford, Massachusetts: Applewood Books, 1992).

https://books.google.com/books/about/The_Country_Builder_s_Assistant.html?id=saTs_3AMdwMC

21. Clark, *History of the Congregational Churches*, vol. 2, 271, 349-350.
22. Library of Congress. Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Records/Historic American Landscapes Survey, "8. Exterior View - First Church of Christ (Congregational), Main Street, between School & Church Streets, Farmington, Hartford County, CT," Accessed July 2, 2018.
<https://www.loc.gov/resource/hhh.ct0272.photos/?sp=3>
23. Proceedings in Commemoration of the Organization in Pittsfield, February 7, 1864, of the First Church of Christ, February 7, 1889 (Pittsfield, Mass: Press of the Sun Printing Company, 1889), 72. Accessed July 2, 2018.
https://books.google.com/books?id=oZcsAAAAYAAJ&source=gbs_navlinks_s
24. Williamson, *The History of The City*, vol.1, 260, 286.
25. Abbott, *History of Belfast*, 12.
26. In 1824, many men in Winthrop, Maine were severely injured and some, apparently, were killed when the Congregational meetinghouse frame they were building and standing on gave way. As noted in a Belfast newspaper article then:
"The scene that now presented itself was truly shocking. Upwards of thirty men had fallen from the top of the frame, and now lay buried beneath the fragments of timber, most of them severely wounded, and one or two literally crushed in pieces!"
 ~ *Hancock Gazette* (Belfast, Maine: Jun 16, 1824) 3.

 In 1826, some men were badly injured when, while they were constructing the frame of a new meetinghouse in Montville, Maine, a part of its belfry fell on them.
 ~ *Hancock Gazette* (Belfast, Maine: Jun 14, 1826) 3.
27. Williamson, *The History of The City*, vol.1, 259.
28. Williamson, *The History of The City*, vol.1, 261.
29. Morse, Frank P., *Material Suggested for Use in the Schools in Observance of the Tercentenary of Massachusetts Bay Colony and of the General Court and one hundred fiftieth anniversary of the adoption of the constitution of the Commonwealth*, (Bulletin, Massachusetts, Dept of Education, 1930), no. 1,78.
30. Photo by Paul Wainwright < <http://www.paulwainwrightphotography.com> > and secured through Wikimedia Commons, "File:Millville MA box pews.jpg," Accessed July 2, 2018.
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Millville_MA_box_pews.jpg.
 ~ *The Chestnut Street Meeting House*, Millville, Massachusetts, "Home Page," Accessed July 2, 2018. <http://www.chestnutstreetmeetinghouse.org/>
31. Williamson, Joseph, *History of The City of Belfast in the State of Maine, 1875-1900*, vol. 2, (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1913), xxix.

32. Benes, *Meetinghouses*, 71.
33. Benes, *Meetinghouses*, 62.
34. Benes, *Meetinghouses*, 70.
35. Williamson, *The History of The City*, vol.1, 260.
36. Dunton, Caroline Field, *First Church in Belfast, Maine, 1796-1946*. 5th ed., (Belfast, Maine: The Journal Publishing Co., Inc., (July 1976), 14.
37. Williamson, *The History of The City*, vol.1, 215, 628-629.
38. Benjamin, *The Country Builder's Assistant*, plate 27.
39. Williamson, *The History of The City*, vol.1, 259.
~ Benjamin, *The Country Builder's Assistant*, Plate 27.
40. Williamson, *History of The City of Belfast*, vol. 2, xxix.
41. Earle, Alice Morse, *The Sabbath in Puritan New England*, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1891), 16.
42. Earle, *The Sabbath*, 87-88.
43. Williamson, *History of The City of Belfast*, vol. 2, 33.
44. Williamson, *The History of The City*, vol.1, 268.
45. Williamson, *The History of The City*, vol.1, 273.
46. Williamson, *The History of The City*, vol.1, 273.
47. Williamson, *The History of The City*, vol.1, 260.
48. Williamson, *The History of The City*, vol.1, 260.
49. Williamson, *History of The City of Belfast*, vol. 2, 34.
50. Nichols, Arthur H., The Bells of Paul and Joseph W. Revere, *Historical Collections of the Essex Institute* 48, no. 1 (January 1912), 4.
~ Nichols, Arthur H., The Bells of Paul and Joseph W. Revere, *Historical Collections of the Essex Institute* 47, no. 4 (October 1911), 301.
51. Edward Stickney and Evelyn Stickney, *The Bells of Paul Revere, His Sons & Grandsons*, revised ed. (1976), 21.
52. Stickney, *The Bells of Paul Revere*, 13.

53. Stickney, *The Bells of Paul Revere*, 13.

54. HMDb.org, The Historical Marker Database, "Belfast Historian's Home - The Museum in the Streets," Accessed July 2, 2018. <https://www.hmdb.org/marker.asp?marker=59390>
~ Estate, "38 High ST, Belfast, ME 04915—Waldo County," Accessed July 2, 2018. <https://www.estate.com/listings/info/38-high-st--56>

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56. Earle, *The Sabbath*, 86.

57. Earle, *The Sabbath*, 94-95.

58. Earle, *The Sabbath*, 87-88.

59. Hough, Walter, Fire As An Agent in Human Culture, *United State National Museum Bulletin* 139 (1926): 19, plate 4.

60. Rev. Cazneau Palfrey, William Frothingham, 1801-1852, in Sprague, William Buell, *Annals of the American Unitarian Pulpit: Or, Commemorative Notices of Distinguished Clergymen of the Unitarian Denomination in the United States, from Its Commencement to the Close of the Year Eighteen Hundred and Fifty-five*, (New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1865), 357-360.
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61. Evangelical Missionary Society of Massachusetts, *The Christian Disciple*, no. 74, New Series - no. 6, November and December, 1819, 475, 479.

62. Williamson, *The History of The City*, vol.1, 259.

63. Williamson, *The History of The City*, vol.1, 260, 262, 277-278.
~ Rev. Cazneau Palfrey, Funeral Discourse, Delivered at the Unitarian Church, upon the occasion of the death of Rev. Wm. Frothingham, Sunday, June 27, 1852, *Republican Journal*, (Belfast: July 9, 1852), 1.

64. The Evangelical Missionary Society of Massachusetts, *The Christian Disciple*, no. 69, new series, no. 1, (January and February, 1819), 76.
~ Williamson, *The History of The City*, vol.1, 280.

65. The concern of First Church members about Rev. Frothingham's theology may have been added to by the January/February, 1819 issue of *The Christian Disciple*. That magazine regularly reported on the mission work of the Evangelical Missionary Society of Massachusetts. In back to back articles that issue contained both an article on the EMS which mentioned its gift of sacramental furniture to Belfast and an article which strongly supported Unitarian views and bluntly stated the following in an editorial comment:

To us indeed the doctrine of the trinity (sic) plainly appears to be self-contradictory; and we

might reason a prior, that it could not make a part of a revelation from God; for what is self-contradictory cannot be true . . .”

Reasons offered by Samuel Eddy, Esq. For his opinions, to the First Baptist Church in Providence, from which he was compelled to withdraw for heterodoxy. Second edition. Jones & Wheeler, 1818, copied in part and commented on in *The Christian Disciple*, no. 69, new series, no. 1, (January and February, 1819), 62-74.

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MAY 25, 1819

Two Belfast Selectman send the following letter to the editor of the *Hallowell Gazette* (ME). Apparently, they also send this same letter to newspapers in other Maine towns as well, to warn people. Note: Kine is an old English word for cattle. Kine Pock is another name for cowpox.

“The small Pox having lately broken out in this place and spread in the country beyond our controls the subscribers, Selectmen of said Belfast, feel solicitous to notify the public of their danger, and justify their conduct.

A short time since a pair of pantaloons were picked up by a Mr. Andrew Patterson, on the eastern side of our Bay, from which it is supposed his wife took the small pox; but before our Physicians would pronounce upon her disease, the small pox contagion was communicated to twenty or thirty of the neighborhood. As soon as the subscribers had notice of the existence of the contagion, they took all possible measures to limit the disease and prevent the spread of the contagion. But the public alarm produced an immediate and great pressure for inoculation for the Kine Pock, & some genuine Kine Pock matter was immediately obtained from Dr. Hardy of Bucksport.

This matter from the lancets of some of our Physicians has produced vast many cases of the genuine Kine Pock; while unfortunately, and in a manner yet inexplicable, the same matter from the lancets of some others of our Physicians has produced the Small pox. From the Small Pox matter thus produced, extensive inoculations by Physicians and others have been made – From this source the Small Pox has broken out in all directions from this place—and the subscribers know not the limits, as persons inoculated with the Small Pox in this manner and from this source, have gone from this place in all directions.

MANASSEH SLEEPER, JAMES McCRILLIS”

Hallowell Gazette, vol. 6, issue 23, (Hallowell, Maine: Wednesday, June 09, 1819), 3.

MAY 27, 1819

This Bangor newspaper of May 27, 1819 notes that Small Pox “*is now prevalent to an alarming degree in Belfast*” and it has been introduced “*by a vessel arrived in this river from the West-Indies.*” The article also notes that there isn’t a single case of small pox in Bangor, as nearly all its inhabitants have been inoculated with Kine Pock.

Bangor Weekly Register, vol. 4, issue 21, (Bangor, Maine: May 27, 1819) 3.

JUNE 9, 1819

A letter writer reports to a Portland, Maine newspaper that there are no new small pox cases in Belfast. Additionally, it notes that nearly all without the disease have been inoculated in Belfast, and “*near or quite all in the towns in this quarter have been vaccinated.*”

Extract of a letter to the Editor, dated Jackson, (Me.) June 9, *Weekly Eastern Argus*, vol. 16, issue 820 (Portland, Maine: June 15, 1819), 3.

JULY 3, 1819

Dr. Eben. Poor writes that same Portland newspaper, *Weekly Eastern Argus*, and gives the following details. Vaccinations for small pox were procured from Bucksport on April 28 by a Dr. Chandler and that day physicians like Dr. Poor and Dr. Chandler began vaccinating people in Belfast with it. However, that supply was soon exhausted. On May 5, matter was collected from some of those people vaccinated on April 28 whose arms were then “filling,” and it was used by physicians to vaccinate other people. However, beginning May 11, it was discovered that three of the people vaccinated by Dr. Chandler on April 28, whose matter was then used to vaccinate others, had themselves developed small pox. A warrant was filed against Dr. Chandler, but a Court of Inquiry acquitted him. As Dr. Poor reported on July 3, “*few lives have been lost*” and “*there is not a solitary case of the small pox in this town to our knowledge.*”

Weekly Eastern Argus, vol. 16, issue 824 (Portland, Maine: July 13, 1819) 2-3.

70. Rev. William Frothingham’s wife, Lois (Barrett), whom he had married in Concord, Massachusetts in 1805, also died in Concord on May 2, 1819.

Wyman, Thomas Bellow; Frothingham, Thomas Goddard, *The Frothingham Genealogy*, (Boston: T.R. Marvin & Son, 1916), 100.

71. Abbott, *History of Belfast*, 12.

72. Williamson, *The History of The City*, vol.1, 278-279.

73. Williamson, *The History of The City*, vol.1, 282.

~ Belfast, Hancock County, District of Maine, *Census for 1820*, (Washington: Gales & Seaton, 1821), 20.

This census reported that 2,026 people were then living in Belfast.

<https://www.webcitation.org/6YSasqtfX?url=http://www.census.gov/prod/www/decennial.html>

74. *Bangor Weekly Register*, vol 4, issue 32, (Bangor, Maine: Aug 12, 1819), 3.

75. Williamson, *The History of The City*, vol.1, 264, 278-279, 283.

76. Joseph Williamson noted that Doctor Herman Abbot had gathered facts to compile a history of the town of Belfast. But Abbot's untimely death brought an end to that project and his manuscript containing those facts was lost for many years before it was discovered in a trunk and brought to Williamson's attention. As Williamson added:

"Dr. Abbot, the author, was a native of Wilton, N.H., and practiced his profession here from 1810, until his death, which took place July 24, 1825, at the age of forty-two years."

Abbott, *History of Belfast*, 1, 12.

77. Williamson, *The History of The City*, vol.1, 280.

78. I was unable to find any indication that either First Parish (formed in 1811) or The Congregational Society associated with The First Church in Belfast (formed in 1820 and reorganized in 1824) were actually legally incorporated in Massachusetts law records in 1811–1820 or in Maine law records in 1820–1825. They appear to have been unincorporated religious societies in those periods, which the 1811 change in Massachusetts law provided for. Typically, when such societies were incorporated the names of their initial members are shown in the Act which incorporates them.

<http://lldc.mainelegislature.org/Open/Mass/1806-1820/>

<http://lldc.mainelegislature.org/Open/Laws/>

~ For the 1824 reorganization see: Williamson, *The History of The City*, vol.1, 284.

79. Speaking of Rev. Frothingham's ordination in 1819, the Evangelical Missionary Society reported the following:

"On this occasion, the house was crowded, and they whose privilege it was to witness the solemnities of installation, can never forget the christian (sic) joy that was manifested; nor they who aided in the re-establishment of the ministry here, the feelings of gratitude that were expressed for the enjoyment of so great a blessing."

Installation, *The Christian Disciple*, no. 72, new series, no. 4, (July and August, 1819), 336.

80. On page 264 of his history, Joseph Williamson indicates that the new church connected with First Parish was formed on August 12, 1819 by eight persons, including Rev. Frothingham. In contrast, on page 268 Williamson says that new church was formed on September 19, 1819. Calvin Montague Clark gives August 12, 1819 as the date of that church's gathering, but notes, in contrast to Williamson, that according to the records of that church, six persons, not eight, gathered it. Clark also indicates that Williamson's September 19 date is incorrect. Dr. Abbott gives the same August 12, 1819 date and names the six people, including Rev. Frothingham, who *"formed themselves into a Church by adopting a platform and covenant . . ."*

~ Williamson, *The History of The City*, vol. 1, 264, 268.

~ Clark, *History of the Congregational Churches*, vol. 2, 314.

~ Abbott, *History of Belfast*, 13.

81. Williamson, *History of The City*, vol. 2, 33.

82. Greenleaf, *Sketches of the Ecclesiastical History*, 169.

83. Williamson, *The History of The City*, vol.1, 268, 276-280.
~ Clark, *History of the Congregational Churches*, vol. 2, 314.
84. Williamson, *History of The City*, vol. 2, 44.
~ The Conference Room was to be sold at auction on May 5, 1832.
Maine Working Men's Advocate, (Belfast, Maine: May 03, 1832), 3.
85. Williamson, *The History of The City*, vol.1, 286-287.
~ The North Church was designed by architect Col. Deane of Thomaston, Maine.
Maine Working Men's Advocate, (Belfast, Maine: Dec 01, 1831), 3.
86. Williamson, *The History of The City*, vol.1, 277, 270.
87. *The Christian Disciple*, no. 74, new series no. 6, 479.
88. Communication from "An Inhabitant," *Hancock Gazette*, vol. 1, issue 13, (Belfast, Maine: September 28, 1820), 3.
~ Communication from "The Choir," *Hancock Gazette*, vol. 1, issue 16, (Belfast, Maine: October 19, 1820) 3.
89. Williamson, *The History of The City*, vol.1, 268.
~ Earle, *The Sabbath*, 225-227.
90. Williamson, *The History of The City*, vol.1, 786-789.
91. The *Republican Journal* speaks of the organ maker as Henry Erben of New York; Joseph Williamson refers to him as Henry Urban, of Boston.
~ *Republican Journal*, (Belfast: July 16, 1835), 2.
~ Williamson, *The History of The City*, vol.1, 268.
~ Dunton, *First Church in Belfast*, 20.
92. Williamson, *The History of The City*, vol.1, 270.
93. *Republican Journal*, (Belfast: April 11, 1839), 3.
94. Colton, Rev. Aaron Merrick, *The Old Meeting House and Vacation Papers Humorous and Other*, collected for publication by his brother, G. Q. Colton, (New York: Worthington Co., 1890) 14.
95. Williamson, *The History of The City*, vol.1, 270.
96. Library of Congress. Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Records/Historic American Landscapes Survey, "14. General View From Vestibule Into Sanctuary to Table - First Parish Church, Town Green, Thayer Drive, Lancaster, Worcester county, MA," Accessed July 2, 2018.
<https://www.loc.gov/resource/hhh.ma0952.photos/?sp=14&q=lancaster%2C+massachusetts>

97. Williamson, *The History of The City*, vol.1, 268.
98. *Republican Journal*, (Belfast, Maine: August 3, 1849), 3.
99. Williamson, *The History of The City*, vol.1, 271.
~ *Republican Journal* (Belfast, Maine: Friday, September 21, 1849), 3.
100. An Act to Incorporate the Unitarian Parsonage Proprietary in Belfast, Chapter 604, *Approved March 14, 1856, Acts and Resolves Passed by the Thirty-Fifth Legislature of the State of Maine, A.D. 1856*, (Augusta: Fuller & Fuller, 1856), 662.
101. Williamson, *The History of The City*, vol. 1, 273.
102. *Republican Journal*, (Belfast, Maine: September 14th, 1860), 2.
103. Williamson, *The History of The City*, vol.1, 467.
~ *Republican Journal*, (Belfast, Maine: May 17, 1861), 2.
104. *Republican Journal*, (Belfast, Maine: January 10th, 1868), 2.
105. *Republican Journal*, (Belfast, Maine: June 19, 1868), 3.
106. Williamson, *The History of The City*, vol.1, 273.
107. Williamson, *The History of The City*, vol.1, 273.
108. To see the stenciling, look at the walls on either side of the organ.
Dunton, *First Church in Belfast*, 13.
109. Williamson, *History of The City*, vol. 2, 34-45.
110. Williamson,, *History of The City*, vol. 2, 35.
~ An Act Additional to Sections Fourteen, Fifteen, Sixteen and Eighteen of Chapter Twelve of the Revised Statutes, relating to Parishes, Chapter 32, *Acts and Resolves of the Sixtieth Legislature of the State of Maine, 1881*, (Augusta: Sprague & Son, 1881), 22-23.
http://lldc.mainelegislature.org/Open/Laws/1881/1881_PL_c032.pdf
111. *Minutes of the Seventy-Fourth Annual Meeting, Lowell, June 20-22*, The General Association of the Congregational Churches of Massachusetts (Boston: Congregational Publishing Society, 1876), 12.
112. *The Homiletic Review*, vol. 59, no. 4, (New York: Funk & Wagtails Co., April 1910), 345.
113. Anders, Howard S., A. M., M. D., The Progress of the Individual Cup movement, Especially among Churches, presented in the Section on State medicine, at the Forty-eighth Annual meeting of the American Medical Association, held at Philadelphia, June 104, 1897, *The Journal of the American Medical Association*, vol. 29, (Chicago: October 16, 1897), 792.

- ~ “Who First Adopted Individual Cups As A Regular Communion Practice?,” *Sharper Iron*, Accessed July 20, 2018.
<https://sharperiron.org/article/who-first-adopted-individual-cups-as-regular-communion-practice>
114. *The Assembly Herald*, Presbyterian Church in General Assembly, July 1900, 890.
115. Buck, Edward, *Massachusetts Ecclesiastical Law*, (Boston: Gould and Lincoln, 1866), 140-141.
116. Showalter, Douglas K., “Our Becoming A Free Church,” *Chapters on the Congregational Heritage of the Massachusetts Conference of the United Church of Christ*, (Self-published, June 2003), 12-30.
117. Even as late as 1886, it was reported that of 18 Associations in Massachusetts which had a total of 422 Congregational churches in them, only 45 of those churches reported in a survey that they included an offering in their worship.
Minutes of the Eighty-Fourth Annual Meeting, Westfield, June 15-17, Annual Report of the General Association of the Congregational Churches of Massachusetts, 1886, (Boston: Congregational Publishing Society, 1886), 22.
118. Showalter, *Chapters on the Congregational Heritage*, 12-22.
119. Williamson, *History of The City of Belfast*, vol. 2, 32.
120. Caroline F. Dunton’s 1946 booklet, *First Church in Belfast*, 24-28, is very helpful in understanding the events related to this Federation and the subsequent Incorporation of The First Church in Belfast in 1925. She appears to have been a very active participant in that process.
121. In February 1922, an Anglican magazine published the following text, which it said was the twelve Articles of Federation recently adopted by Belfast, Maine’s First Unitarian and North Congregational Churches:
- Article I.** *The Unitarian Church and Parish and the Congregational Church and Parish of Belfast, Maine, agree to unite for the purpose of supporting a pastor, holding meetings together and carrying on religious work in the city of Belfast.*
- Article II.** *The organization thus established shall be known as The Federated Churches of Belfast.*
- Article III.** *All members of either church or parish shall be regarded as members of this organization, and entitled to vote on all matters pertaining to the purposes of the organization.*
Any person not a member of either of these churches or parishes, may become a member of this organization on recommendation of the Executive Committee by majority vote of the members of the organization, present at any meeting.
- Article IV.** *Each of said churches shall maintain its separate identity and organization.*
- Article V.** *An executive committee of ten shall be chosen by the members of this organization at the annual meeting, who shall have general charge of the business interests and material welfare of the organization, except the calling or dismissal of a pastor.*

They shall elect a clerk and treasurer, appoint such subcommittees and other officers as they see fit and prescribe their powers and duties.

Article VI. *The regular Sunday service and Sunday School shall be held in the Unitarian Church and seats therein shall be free.*

Article VII. *In the case of vacancy in the pastorate a new pastor shall be chosen by a majority vote of the members of this organization present at any annual or special meeting. They may also by a similar vote accept the resignation of a pastor.*

Article VIII. *This agreement shall become effective when accepted by a vote of said churches and parishes, and shall continue in force one year, and until terminated as herein provided.*

After the expiration of one year, either of said churches and parishes may by majority vote of members present at any legal meeting, terminate the agreement.

Article IX. *The annual meeting of this organization shall be held the first Monday in October at 7:30 p. m., and notice of the place of such meeting shall be announced from the pulpit on the previous Sunday.*

Article X. *Special meetings of the members of this organization may be held at the close of the morning service on any Sunday, notice of which shall be announced from the pulpit on that or the preceding Sunday.*

Article XI. *Fifteen members shall constitute a quorum at any meeting.*

Article XII. *These articles may be amended by two-thirds vote of the members present at any annual or special meeting of this organization.*

“Church Unity While You Wait,” Editorial Comment, *The American Church Monthly: A Magazine of comment, criticism and review dealing with questions confronting the Anglican Communion and more especially the Church in the United States*, vol. 10, number 6, (New Brunswick, N.J., February 1922), 454-456.

122. Reflecting that federation, the Congregational Year Book with statistics for 1922, begins this year to list the Congregational Church in Belfast as “Belfast, 1st Fed.”—adding that word “Fed.” That listing shows that church as gathered in 1796 and that its building was erected in 1831 [apparently a reference to the North Church building]. It lists Rev. William F. Skerrye as the minister of that church and indicates that he is a Unitarian. It also lists that Congregational church as having 108 total members and 121 families then.

The Congregational Year-Book, Statistics for 1922, vol. 45 (Cooperstown, New York: The Cooperstown Press, 1922), 176.

123. Dunton, *First Church in Belfast*, 26.

124. Research done in the records of The First Church in Belfast.

~ Trustees’ Records 1915-1935

~ Clerk’s and Treasurer’s Records 1811-1920

~ Executive Committee Clerk’s and Treasurer’s Records 1921-1938

~ Dunton, *First Church in Belfast*, 28.

125. Chapter 55, *Acts and Resolves*, 1891, 42-44.

126. *The Congregational Year-Book, Statistics for 1926*, vol. 49 (New York: The National Council of Churches, 1926), 182.

127. *The Congregational Year-Book, Statistics for 1925*, vol. 48 (New York: The National Council of Churches, 1925), 184.

128. Belfast, Maine, *Wikipedia*
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Belfast,_Maine

129. Osborn, D.S. et alia, Orthodox Church, *Map of the City of Belfast, Waldo Co., Maine*, (Philadelphia: E. M. Woodfern, 1855).
Library of Congress: <https://www.loc.gov/item/2007626398/>

130. Woodbury, Roger M., The Mystery at the First Church, *Maine Life*, (January 1980): 15, 19.